



The Word of Prophecy Made More Certain

***Old and New Testament Prophecy Fulfilled
in Christ and the Church—
the Kingdom of God***

By Jim Wilsford

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Photo from the summit of Mt Sinai
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1. The Foundation of True Prophecy

Prophecy is the speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God. While it may be predictive, foretelling the future, this is not the primary meaning. According to Vine, prophecy “is the declaration of that which cannot be known by natural means, Matt 26:68, it is the forth-telling of the will of God, whether with reference to the past, the present, or the future.” (From Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words, Copyright © 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers.)

The primary thesis of this study is that God's mystery and all prophecy finds its fulfillment in Christ and the kingdom of God, the church. This fulfillment of God's mystery was the consummation of God's eternal purpose in Christ according to Eph 1:9-10:

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring **all things** in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. [Emphasis added.]

Paul stated the mystery of God's will in a few easy-to-understand words in Eph 3:6: “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.”

That God brought all things together under Christ leaves no room for modern additions or changes to God's eternal purpose, whether they be offered by denominational actions, ecclesiastic decree, supposedly latter day revelations, or any other utterances or dictums from the mind of man. God brought all things together in Christ, the eternal savior, and the church, the eternal kingdom of God. Eph 1:18-23 makes clear that *all things* are the specifics of this consummation of God's eternal purpose with nothing held back:

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

This study will traverse the Old and New Testament prophecies, showing the fulfillment of these true principles of God's eternal purpose:

- God's mighty strength raised Christ from the dead.
- God's mighty strength seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.
- Christ sits far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given now and forever more.
- God placed all things under his feet.
- God appointed him to be head over everything for the church.
- The church is his body the fullness of Christ.
- Christ fills everything in every way.

All of these are the be all and end all of God's revelation to man. The certainty of a savior offered; a church established; an eternal king, victorious on his throne in God's kingdom; and

a victory over sin and death and the devil, beast, and false prophet. If this scripture be true, God holds no event in abeyance against some time future to this victory in Christ Jesus. Nor can there be any circumstances where the coming and offering of the Christ failed to make the word of prophesy more sure.

God Has Spoken

To study seriously the efficacy of God's prophecies, one must first believe that God has authoritatively spoken his will in the scriptures. In so many places, the Bible has affirmed with certainty that God spoke through Christ, that to reject the fulfillment of these utterances is to reject the Bible as God's word.

Heb 1:1-2 asserts that God spoke through the prophets, but in these last days, he spoke through Jesus:

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe.

God also spoke with certainty in Matt 17:5, when he told the disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration to listen to Jesus, the son of God: "5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

The Apostles and Prophets the Foundation of God's Household

While Jesus was still living among the apostles, he promised them the power of the Holy Spirit, which would enable them to speak with certainty the eternal truths of God's will. According to John 14:26, this inspiration was inclusive of *all things* and everything: "26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." As if to make this principle certain, Jesus reiterated it in John 16:13-15, making the apostles and prophets the certain and only bearers of the word of the Lord:

13 But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. 14 He will bring glory to me by taking from what is mine and making it known to you.

In Eph 2:19-22, Paul showed how the apostles and prophets, to whom this power of revelation came, were the foundation of God's household, God's building, the temple of the Lord, and the dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit:

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

The apostles and prophets, given this immutable power through the Holy Spirit, received a final charge from the Lord, in Matt 28:18-20, to teach **everything** commanded by the Lord:

"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.

Everything I have commanded you is an all-inclusive qualifier of the apostles and prophets as spokespersons for God and the Lord Jesus Christ; as such, it mutually excludes all new voices, latter day ages utterances and expanding theologies. No person, organization, denomination, or even the angels of heaven can change the word of the apostles and prophets Gal 1:6-9:

6 I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you by the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel— 7 which is really no gospel at all. Evidently some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!

Modern denominations and latter day sectarians pervert the gospel, turning to their different gospels, claiming inspiration by the Spirit or delivery by angels. While Paul, here, limited the revelation of the gospel to the gospel preached by the apostles and prophets, Jude limited the faith to the one **once for all** entrusted to the saints in Jude 3:

“3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.”

Based on these scriptures, the warning of John, specific to the *Revelation*, may be generalized to all who would add to or take away from the revelation given to the apostles and prophets. The eternal condemnation pronounced by Paul becomes universal, and John’s curses and plagues (which are eternal condemnation) become universal. John wrote in Rev 22:18-19:

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

No one has the right to alter the inspired word of the apostles and prophets.

The Mystery Made Known by Revelation

Since by the Spirit, the inspired apostles and prophets revealed the complete revelation of God, how does that which they receive come to us? Paul explained how the true and certain and only revelation came to us by reading the written word of the inspired apostles and prophets in Eph 3:2-6:

2 Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the **mystery made known** to me by **revelation**, as I have already written briefly. 4 In reading this, then, **you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ**, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has **now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets**. 6 This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.

This passage is unequivocal in establishing the *what* of revelation and the *who* of revelation. *What of revelation* is God’s mystery described in verse 6: 6 “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” *Who of revelation* is found in verse 5: “It has now been revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets.”

When the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles and prophets on the day of Pentecost, Peter claimed emphatically “this is what was spoken of by the prophet Joel.” Joel had pointed to the specifics of God’s revelation through the apostles and prophets on that day, confirmed in

fulfillment by Peter who said, "This is what was spoken." Thus, Acts 2:16-18, confirms the apostles and prophets as the sole source of New Testament prophecy:

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.

18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

No One Knows the Thoughts of God except the Spirit of God

Paul told us how the mystery came to us from the apostles and prophets in Eph 3:2-6, cited above. He also told us how it came to the apostles in such a singular and certain way that no one else ever could claim the power—not ecclesiastics or clerics, not churches or denominations, not latter day prophets or angels. 1Cor 2:10-13 teaches:

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. 12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. 13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

In reverse order, the apostles and prophets received the spiritual truths of God in spiritual words of God. The Spirit taught the apostles and prophets these spiritual truths and spiritual words. The entire purpose was that the apostles and prophets might understand what God freely gave them. The only way one can know the mystery of God is by the Spirit of God, which came only to the apostles and prophets.

One cannot make up or divine the will of God separate from the Spirit of God telling what the deep things of God are. It has been this way from the beginning. When Pharaoh's butler and cupbearer sought the interpretation of their dreams from Joseph, Joseph revealed an eternal truth about prophecy in Gen 40:8:

8 "We both had dreams," they answered, "but there is no one to interpret them."

Then Joseph said to them, "Do not interpretations belong to God? Tell me your dreams."

The interpretations of God's prophecies, dreams, and visions belong to God. Man is not free to render the deep things of God, as he might like in his own mind and imaginings. Later, in Gen 41:8, Pharaoh had difficulty with interpreting his dreams:

8 In the morning his mind was troubled, so he sent for all the magicians and wise men of Egypt. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but no one could interpret them for him.

When Pharaoh called on Joseph to help him, Joseph answered forever the question of who holds the deep meanings of God, whether the meaning of visions, dreams, or prophecies. In Gen 41:15-16, Joseph answered emphatically:

15 Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I had a dream, and no one can interpret it. But I have heard it said of you that when you hear a dream you can interpret it."

16 "I cannot do it," Joseph replied to Pharaoh, "but God will give Pharaoh the answer he desires."

Modern man cannot do it either, for the answer is in the mind of God. Moses went on to write in Gen 41:32: "32 The reason the dream was given to Pharaoh in two forms is that the matter has been firmly decided by God, and God will do it soon." When He gives visions, dreams, and prophecies, God has firmly decided the meaning. People are not and have never been free to decide the meaning at the pleasure of their human thoughts and imagination.

How Prophecy Comes to Man

If man cannot make up interpretations and meanings for prophesies in the Old and New Testaments, from where do they come? Peter has answered this question for us. In 2 Peter 1:19-21, he wrote:

19 And we have the word of the prophets **made more certain**, and you will do well to **pay attention** to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, **you must understand that no prophecy** of Scripture came about by the **prophet's own interpretation**. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the **will of man**, but men spoke **from God** as they were carried along **by the Holy Spirit**. [Emphasis added.]

No prophecy ever had its interpretation by the prophet; nor did any prophecy have its origin in the will of man; prophets speak from God as the Holy Spirit moves them. The statement by Peter is all-inclusive of the will of God and all-exclusive of the will of man.

Conclusion

From these scriptures, people come to know that neither prophesy nor its interpretation comes by the will of man, but by the will of God. When the prophets of old, such as, Joel, prophesy, the scriptures must interpret the prophecies. When the apostles and prophets of the New Testament prophesy, the scriptures must interpret the prophecies. Since there are many false prophets afoot in the world, there can be no other way to the truth of God's word. Prophecies and interpretation must be from that *faith delivered once for all*. Indeed, prophecies and their interpretations belong to God alone.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:9-10: In whom did God purpose the good pleasure of his will? To whom did God make known his pleasure?
2. Eph 3:20-23: Where is Christ now? Describe the power God gave to Christ. Of what is Christ head? What is another name for the church? What is the fullness of Christ?
3. Matt 28:18-20: Who has all authority? What are the apostles to teach? What are baptized believers to obey?
4. Heb 1:1-2: Through whom does God speak in these last days? When did God speak to the forefathers? How did God speak to the forefathers?
5. John 16:13-15: Into what was the Holy Spirit to guide the apostles? From whom does the Holy Spirit get that which he speaks?

6. Eph 2:19-22: Who is the chief cornerstone of the household of God? Upon what foundation is the household of God built? Can you find two other names for the household of God?
7. Gal 1:6-9: What is no gospel at all? What was causing confusion? What happens to an apostle or an angel in heaven if they preach a gospel other than the one preached by the apostles?
8. Jude 3: What was once for all delivered? For what are Christians to contend?
9. Rev 22:18-19: What happens to those who add to the words of prophecy? What happens to those who take away from the words of prophecy?
10. Eph 3:2-6: How was the mystery of God made known to Paul? What did Paul do with the revelation? What will we be able to understand when we read what Paul wrote? What has now been revealed by the Spirit? To whom has it been revealed?
11. Acts 2:16-21: What was spoken of by the prophet Joel? When was Joel's prophecy fulfilled?
12. 1 Cor 2:10-13: Who searches the deep things of God? Who knows the thoughts of God? Who taught the apostles the words of God? In what did the apostles and prophets express spiritual truths?
13. Gen 41:15-16: Who interprets dreams, visions, and prophecy?
14. Gen 41:32: Who firmly decides the meaning of dreams, visions, and prophecies?
15. 2 Peter 1:19-21: What is made more certain? To what are we to pay attention? By what does a prophecy of scripture never come? What is the origin of prophecy? From whom do men speak?

2. The Quicksand of False Prophecy

Lesson one—*The foundation of True Prophecy*--showed from the scriptures that people must understand that neither prophecy nor its interpretation comes by the will of man, but by the will of God. When the prophets of old, such as Joel, prophesy, the scriptures must interpret their prophecies. When the apostles and prophets of the New Testament prophesy, the scriptures must interpret their prophecies. Since there are many false prophets afoot in the world, there can be no other way to the truth of God's word. Prophecies and interpretation must be from that *faith delivered once for all*. Indeed, prophecies and their interpretations belong to God alone.

Since the foundation of true prophecy is the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, any prophecies coming after the work of these inspired men comes from false prophecies. These prophets are doing the work of their father, the devil. This lesson—*The Quicksand of False Prophecy*--explores the Bible teaching on false prophets and their false prophecies. The teaching of Jesus warned of these false prophets and their deceitful teaching. At the close of his sermon from the mountain in Matt 7:24-27, the Lord separates those who hear his words and put them into action from those who hear his words and do not put them into practice:

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

These words of the Lord followed his detailed teaching on how we may know false prophets in Matt 7:15-20. Since false prophets aim to deceive humankind, they and their prophecies become the quicksand that swallows those who are deceived by their work.

Recognizing False Prophets

Since false prophets destroy the hope of those whom they deceive, the recognition of false prophets and their prophecies becomes critical. Early in the Old Testament, the followers of God learned how to recognize false prophets. In Deut 18:21-22, Moses recorded a rule for discerning false prophets:

21 You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the Lord?" 22 If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the Lord does not take place or come true, that is a message the Lord has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.

How many times since this have false prophets and teachers forecast events that never happen. For example, Jehovah Witnesses are notorious for recasting the date that they forecast for the coming of the Lord. Watchtower has given Jehovah's Witnesses 1874 and 1914 as the dates for the Second Coming. At the start of World War I, they gave their followers that time as the beginning of 1,000 years of peace and prosperity that was to accompany their so-called Millennium. It did not happen; it was not true; and they were false prophets. The 1990's ushered in the Gulf War and along with it, the false prophecies predicting it was the Biblical Armageddon. It did not happen; it was not true; they were false prophets.

Jesus, at the close of the Sermon on the Mount gave us the rules that tell us how we may know

false prophets. In Matt 7:15-20, he taught us:

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

The Lord's conclusion is that by the false prophets' fruit, you will recognize them. Just as in the natural world, we know that grapes come from the grapevine, so we know in the spiritual world, spiritual truth comes from Christ and from those that he appointed—his apostles and prophets. After all, Christ had announced in John 15:1-2:

15 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.

We are to watch out for false prophets, who appear as sheep but are ferocious wolves. Is their teaching in the New Testament of Christ? John repeated Christ's critical warning about false teachers and prophets in 2 John 8-11:

8 Watch out that you do not lose what you have worked for, but that you may be rewarded fully. 9 Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son. 10 If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not take him into your house or welcome him. 11 Anyone who welcomes him shares in his wicked work.

False prophets and false teachers run ahead and do not continue in the teaching of Christ. In order to recognize them, we must ask, "Is this teaching the teaching of Christ?" If anyone comes to us and does not bring the teaching of Christ, we should not ask him in or welcome him; for if we do, we share in his wicked work.

Does the teaching of prophets and teachers adhere to the teaching of Christ, the true vine, in the New Testament? If not, they are false.

To recognize false prophets, one must understand that the Bible teaches that divine prophecy would end. When the written word of the New Testament was complete, the spoken word of prophecy stopped. Paul wrote in specific terms that prophecies would cease in 1 Cor 13:8-11:

8 Love never fails. But where there are **prophecies**, they **will cease**; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and **we prophesy in part**, 10 but **when perfection comes**, the imperfect **disappears**. [Emphasis added].

James tells us what that perfection is in James 1:25, "5 But the man who looks intently into the **perfect law that gives freedom**, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it – he will be blessed in what he does." Jude also spoke of this law as the faith that was once for all entrusted (delivered ASV) in Jude 3: " I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was **once for all** entrusted to the saints." [Emphasis added,] Jude made this statement to condemn those who are false teachers and false prophets, as he said in Jude 4:

4 For certain men whose condemnation was written about long ago have secretly slipped in among you. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny Jesus Christ our only Sovereign and Lord.

The days of prophecy ended when the faith *once for all was delivered* to the saints. Any prophecy after the time of the writing of the New Testament is not true. The pioneer preachers made a statement that bears repeating here: If anything is new, it is not true; if it is true, it is not new!

Some false teachers and false prophets will try to refute Paul's teaching: When that which is perfect (the perfect law) is come, that which is in part (prophecy) will be done away. They will say that that which is perfect is heaven. That which is perfect in this context cannot be heaven because 1 Cor 13:13 teaches: "13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love." There will be no faith in heaven; for faith will become knowledge. There will be no hope in heaven, for hope will have become realization. Of faith and knowledge, Paul said 1 Cor 13:12 in this very context: "2 Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then **we shall see face to face**. Now I know in part; then **I shall know fully**, even as I am fully known." Of hope and realization, Paul wrote in Rom 8:24-25: "24 For in this hope we were saved. But **hope that is seen is no hope at all**. Who hopes for what he already has? 25 But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

When the apostles and prophets finished writing the inspired word of God, as we have it today in the New Testament, the work of prophecy ended. All prophecy since then is false prophecy, and we must recognize it as such.

False Prophets Foretold

Christ had warned of false prophets in the Sermon on the Mount, as discussed above. At the end of his time, he also warned of false prophets coming after his death in Matt 24:9-12:

9 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people.

In the same context, he spoke of the deceptive powers of the false prophets, even the power to perform great signs and miracles, especially as regards his coming back to receive his saints. In Matt 24:23-25, Jesus taught:

23 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible.

History is replete with people forecasting the coming of Christ—the *second coming* they call it. The term, *second coming*, does not refer to Christ anywhere in the New Testament. The Lord's teaching is clear: false prophets will come; they will say he has come here or there; but do not believe it. Though they take the name of Christ, and though they perform great signs and miracles, do not believe it. The entire purpose of these false Christ and false prophets is to deceive the elect. This sounds so much like the 21st century, yet the scene has repeated itself for every generation for 2,000 years. [A later lesson will present a detailed study of Matt 24.]

As the apostles were writing the New Testament, they continued to carry the banner of Christ against the advent of the false prophets and false teachers. Peter warned in 2 Peter 2:2:

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them – bringing swift destruction on themselves.

Just as the Lord had said, these false teachers work secretly with their destructive heresies among the Christians. They will go so far as to deny the sovereign Lord.

Paul made it clear that these false prophets and teachers would rise up from within the church itself, even from among the elders (bishops). Echoing the warning of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount, Paul spoke of the distortion and deceit that would come from among the leaders of the church. In Acts 20:29-31, he said:

29 I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. 30 Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. 31 So be on your guard!

Indeed, the greatest purveyors of false prophecy and false teaching have been those claiming to be preachers, clergy, and high up ecclesiastics who claim to speak for God. Many of these falsely interpret the scriptures and many claim latter day powers of inspiration.

False Prophets of the Devil

True Christians must realize that false prophets and false teachers are doing the work of their father the devil. Jesus illustrated that you cannot have it both ways – your father is either God or the devil. Understanding this dichotomy is central to defending the church against false prophets and teachers. We must never give these evil doers the benefit of any doubt. If they have any other teaching than the teaching of Christ, they are more than false prophets and false teachers; they are sons of the devil. Jesus spoke to Jews who had believed him in John 8:31: “31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”

Jesus severely castigated these believing Jews, labeling them as children of the devil in John 8:41b, 43-44:

"We are not illegitimate children," they protested. "The only Father we have is God himself."

43 Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. 44 You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.

False prophets and teachers of today are unable or unwilling to hear what Jesus says. Instead, they want to carry out the will and desires of their father, the devil. The devil does not hold to the truth; neither do his children.

Teachers and students often narrowly interpreted the antichrist as spoken of by John in his letters as those false prophets and teachers afoot in John's day, denying that Jesus came in the flesh. In the passage below, John speaks separately of the *spirit of the antichrist* the motivating force behind the many false prophets. The countervailing force to the antichrist in the passage is the Spirit of God. Thus, the Spirit for Christ prevails against the spirit the antichrist. John wrote in 1 John 4:1-3:

4 Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. 2 This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, 3 but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world.

False prophets and teachers are not merely cherubic and cheery clergymen or dignified and divinely acting ecclesiastics and theologians. Anyone without the teaching of Christ, inspired

by the Spirit of God in the New Testament, is speaking according to the spirit of the antichrist, by the power and will of the devil.

Paul advanced this same truth about the source of false prophets and false teachers in 2 Thess 2:3-4:

3 Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and **the man of lawlessness** is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. 4 He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God.

The man of lawlessness combines in one entity the personification of false prophecy (prophets) and false teaching (teachers), and he does the work of opposing and exalting himself over everything that is called God. Down with Christ; down with the word of Christ; down with the Spirit of God; down with the New Testament of Christ; down with the church of God and Christ; down with God's children, the Christians—all of these and more are opposed by the false apostles and false teachers, summarized here by the term *man of lawlessness*. But up with teaching not found in the Bible; up with speaking *ex cathedra*; up with pronouncements of synod and conventions; up with the terms *reverend* and *holy father*, reserved for God alone in the sacred scriptures; up with the revelry of religious holidays and gambling to raise money; up with rejecting huge passages of scripture on moral living, sexual promiscuity, and homosexuality—all of these and so much more are advanced above the teaching of the scriptures in order for the man of lawlessness to exalt himself.

John identified the *spirit of the antichrist* and Paul identified the *man of lawlessness*, both of which the devil motivates and directs to do his evil work. Paul called this the *work of Satan* in 2 Thess 2:7-12:

7 For the **secret power of lawlessness** is already at work; but **the one** who now holds it back will continue to do so till he is taken out of the way. 8 And then **the lawless one** will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with **the work of Satan** displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that **deceives those who are perishing**. They perish because they refused **to love the truth** and so **be saved**. [Emphasis added.]

Three actors of evil dominate this passage: the secret power of lawlessness, the lawless one, and Satan. Their counterfeit signs and their unrestricted evil aims to deceive the perishing, who are those who refuse to love the truth and so be saved. This same three, who embody evil, stage the world's great deceit. They act through their legions of false prophets and teachers gone abroad in the world, disguised in religious garb and pious demeanor. These false prophets and teachers are themselves disguise as apostles of Christ, according to 2 Cor 11:13-15:

13 For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. 14 And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. 15 It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. Their end will be what their actions deserve.

John in the Revelation also identified this triad of evil—Satan, the power of lawlessness, and the lawless one. The language of the metaphors varies but the meaning is clear. In Rev 16:13-14, John, through his vision, named the three:

13 Then I saw three evil spirits that looked like frogs; they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14

They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.

Paul's *Satan* and John's *dragon* are the same, as John defines the dragon in Rev 12:9: "9 The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil, or Satan, who leads the whole world astray." Paul's *spirit of lawlessness* is John's *beast*, one of unrestricted authority and power over evil in Rev 13:2-3: "The dragon gave the beast his power and his throne and great authority." Paul's *lawless one* is John's *false prophet*, the last entity in this triad of evil, according to Rev 16:13-14:

. . . they came out of the mouth of the dragon, out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet. 14 They are spirits of demons performing miraculous signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world . . .

False prophecy and false teaching is the work of the false prophet in the world. John, while describing the false prophet's capture, stated his job description in Rev 19:20:

20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs, **he had deluded those** who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image.

Paul gave this same job description to the lawless one. Certainly false prophets and teachers are of the devil.

The End of False Teachers and False Prophets

The triad of evil and their minions upon the earth throughout the generations of man will share an equal and just fate. Of the false prophets and teachers, Peter wrote in 2 Peter 2:12:

12 But these men [false prophets and false teachers] blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like brute beasts, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like beasts they too will perish.

Of the beast and the false prophet, John wrote in Rev 19:20:

20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Of the devil, John recorded in Rev 20:10:

10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Of those souls, deceived and deluded, by the working of evil in world, 2 Thess 2:10-12 teaches:

They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie 12 and so that all will be condemned who have not believed the truth but have delighted in wickedness.

The devil's followers perish, just as he will perish, according to "Rev 20:12-15:

14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Matt 7:24-27: Who is the wise man? Who is the foolish man? To what are they compared?
2. Deut 18:21-22: What rule did Moses give for identifying false prophets?
3. Matt 7:15-20: Christians are warned to watch out for whom? What will happen to those who bear bad fruit? How will you recognize false prophets?
4. John 15:1-2: Who is the true vine?
5. 2 John 8-11: Who does not have God? If you continue in the teaching of Christ, whom do you have? What will you share if you welcome a false teacher?
6. 1 Cor 13:8-11: What will cease? When? What will happen to that which is in part?
7. Jude 3: For what are Christians to contend? What was delivered once for all?
8. Jude 4: Who secretly come into the church? What do godless men change?
9. Cor 13:12: What will happen to our faith in heaven?
10. Rom 8:24-25: What will happen to our hope in heaven?
11. 1 Cor 13:13: What three things remain now? Which of these is greatest?
12. Matt 24:9-12: What did the Lord tell the apostles to expect after he left them? How would those who turned away from the faith act? Who would appear?
13. Matt 24:23-25: What would some people say about where Jesus was?
14. 2 Peter 2:1-2: What will false prophets and teachers do secretly?
15. Acts 20:29-31: What did Paul call false teachers? From where would they come? What would they do? What should the church do?
16. John 8:41b, 43-44: Who was the father of these Jews who believed on Christ? Why was Christ's language not clear to them? What was the devil's native language?
17. 1 John 4:1-3: How can you we recognize the Spirit of God? The spirit of the antichrist?
18. 2 Thess 2:3-4: Who will be revealed? What will his fate be? How will he act toward God? What will he do in the temple of God?
19. 2 Thess 2:7-12: What secret power was working in the church? To whom did Paul accord this work? What will happen when the lawless one comes? Why will they perish?
20. 2 Cor 11:13-15: As whom do Satan's workers masquerade? As whom does Satan masquerade? What will their end be?
21. Rev 12:9: What are the different names of the devil?
22. Rev 13:2-3: What three things did the dragon give the beast?
23. Rev 16:13-14: From what three entities do evil spirits come? Against whom do they war?
24. Rev 19:20: How did the false prophet use these miraculous signs?
25. 2 Peter 2:12: What are false prophets like?
26. Rev 19:20-21: What will happen to the beast and the false prophet?
27. Rev 20:10: What will happen to the devil?
28. 2 Thess 2:10-12: What will happen to those who refuse to love the truth? What will happen to those who believe a lie?
29. Rev 20:12-15: What will happen to those whose names are not found in the book of life?

3. Jesus Christ Fulfilled the Word of Prophecy

The previous two lessons have established that the foundation of God's household is the apostles and prophets of the New Testament, and that all prophecy and teaching not found in the New Testament is false. Of these apostles and prophets, Paul wrote in Eph 2:19-21:

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord.

From this foundation alone, the holy temple of God rises. Altering and changing the teaching of these apostles and prophets is such a disastrous sin that Paul pronounced eternal condemnation on those that do it in Gal 1:8: "8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!" When these apostles and prophets died, prophecy ceased. Paul taught in 1 Cor 13:8: "8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away." Jude also taught that the faith was once for all delivered in Jude 3-4: "I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints."

All other prophecy and teaching not found in the New Testament is false and fulfills the prophecy of Christ in Matt 7:15-16:

15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. 16 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles?"

The nature of true prophecy and false prophecy created an inescapable conclusion: Jesus Christ fulfilled the word of prophecy of the Old and New Testaments. The revelation was completed in the New Testament.

The Meaning of the Prophecy of the Old Testament Hidden

The interpretation of prophecy comes only as the Holy Spirit moves men (2 Peter 1:21). Joseph asked Pharaoh in Gen 40:8: "Do not interpretations belong to God?" God has chosen the time and place to reveal his mystery, leaving the prophets of old with explanation to the prophecies that they were giving. Peter explains in 1 Peter 1:10-12:

10 Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, 11 trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. 12 It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.

According to Peter, the ones, who had preached the gospel to them by the Holy Spirit, were the ones who revealed the meaning of the prophecies. The prophets searched intently with the greatest care; but according to 1 Cor 2:7-10, not even the rulers knew God's secret wisdom:

7 No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. 8 None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. 9 However, as it is written:

"No eye has seen,
no ear has heard,
no mind has conceived
what God has prepared for those who love him" –
10 but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit.

The mystery is God's, but he has revealed his mystery to the apostles and prophets by his Spirit.

God, Job, and Moses Foretell the Coming of Jesus, the Christ

The oldest of the prophecies – those from Jehovah, Job, and Moses – foretold the coming of the Christ. After the fall of man, Jehovah pronounced a curse on the serpent, the devil, in Gen 3:15:

15 And I will put enmity
between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and hers;
he will crush your head,
and you will strike his heel."

The offspring of woman would crush the head of the serpent, foretelling the victory of Jesus. From this beginning, God's mystery unfolded in the law and the prophets, promising redemption at the fullness of time. During the patriarchal age, Job already understood the implications of a living redeemer, coming to the earth. Job 19:25 reads:

25 I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.

Moses, many years later, but still so long ago, spoke of the redeemer and his coming in Deut 18:15: "15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him." Embedded in this prophecy is the first notice that the coming redeemer would be a prophet commanding the authority of God: "You must listen to him." God himself used these same words that Moses had used in Matt 17:5: "5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!'"

Philip, as he stood before his accusers, cited this same passage from Moses to prove the authority and divinity of Jesus in Acts 7:37-38:

37 "This is that Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will send you a prophet like me from your own people.' 38 He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us.

From the very beginning to the Revelation, the scriptures foretold the coming of the redeemer as one to whom all humankind must listen.

Jesus Christ Fulfilled the Law and the Prophets

Did Jesus Christ fulfill the law and the prophets? Since Jesus himself and the apostles and prophets affirmed this very proposition, one must accept or deny that they were telling the truth. Jesus contended vigorously that he was the fulfillment of the law and the prophets in his Sermon on the Mount in Matt 5:17-18: "17 Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law

or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them." Of course, the Lord told the truth and persisted in telling this same truth up until he ascended into heaven. Just before his ascension, he told the apostles in Luke 24:44:

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: **Everything** must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." [Emphasis added].

When the Lord said everything, he excluded nothing. He spoke without equivocation or doubt of any kind, leaving no doors open to some additional, unfulfilled prophecies that would create a different conclusion to the New Testament and the Revelation—no future kings, no earthly kingdoms, no new and different resolutions to the gospel story. Jesus was the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, as taught in Rev 22:13: "13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."

The apostles and prophets understood him to be the fulfillment of **everything** in the law and the prophets. Peter in his second gospel sermon in Acts 3:18 affirmed this very fact: "18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer." Paul, during his first missionary journey, preached in Acts 13:32-35 that Jesus was the fulfillment of what God had prepared:

32 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm:

"You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.'

34 The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

"I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.'

35 So it is stated elsewhere:

"You will not let your Holy One see decay.'

What Jesus said about himself—that he was the fulfillment of everything—the apostles and prophets affirmed. People today cannot say they accept the Lord on one hand and deny that he fulfilled everything on the other hand. Jesus, the Christ fulfilled **everything** in the law and the prophets. Without the complete fulfillment of the law and the prophets, there is no gospel, no good news, and no redeemer, Christ the Lord.

Jesus Announced as the Christ

The angels from heaven and God himself announced the coming of Jesus the savior, making certain the word of the prophets from hundreds of years before. Prior to his birth, the angel of the Lord announced the coming of the savior to Joseph and Mary. To Joseph, he said in Matt 1:20-23:

20 But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. 21 She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" – which means, "God with us."

The angel noted that all of this was in fulfillment of the prophecy concerning the virgin birth. Isa 7:14-15 had foretold, "14 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel." The angel gave the same statement of fulfillment of prophesy to Mary in Luke 1:30-33:

30 But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, you have found favor with God.
31 You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus. 32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

These lessons will return to this passage later; but for now, they note that Jesus would be the son of the most high, he would sit on the throne of David, and he would reign over the house of Jacob forever. His kingdom, we learn, will never end. Millennialists deny that Jesus fulfilled all of these prophecies in the New Testament, leaving the flood gate open to their false prophecies and teaching.

Zachariah, the father of John the Baptist, also announced the coming of Jesus, the Christ, confirming all the prophecies all the way back to Job. In Luke 1:68-70, he said:

68 "Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel,
because he has come and has redeemed his people.
69 He has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David
70 (as he said through his holy prophets of long ago).

The phrase—"He raised up a horn of salvation for us"—fulfills the prophecy of David in Ps 18:2:

2 The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer;
my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge.
He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.

More emphatic, is Zachariah's own declaration: ". . . as he said through holy prophets of long ago."

In addition, the angels of heaven announced the Savior in Luke 2:8-14, Jesus as the fulfillment of God's purpose was the Savior, Christ the Lord:

8 And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. 9 An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. 10 But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. 11 Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. 12 This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger."
13 Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying,
14 "Glory to God in the highest,
and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

Jesus Lived as the Christ

From the beginning to the end of his life, Jesus lived as the Christ and as the King. God himself testified to Jesus as his son in Matt 3:16-17:

16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

John the Baptist recognized Jesus as the Lamb of God in John 1:29-31:

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 30 This is the one I meant when I said, 'A man who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' 31 I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

The revelation of Jesus to Israel as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, was the reason that John came baptizing.

Jesus himself announced that he was the only begotten of the father in John 3:16-17:

16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him."

John recognized Jesus in John 3:31-36 as the one who spoke the words of God, having the Holy Spirit of God without limit:

31 "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. 32 He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. 33 The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. 34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. 36 Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

John declared the truth of Christ that renders all millennial arguments void: he is (present tense) above all.

Jesus announced his fulfillment as the promised prophet and king, who was greater than any of those of the Old or of the New Testament. Matthew recorded the following narrative in Matt 16:13-16:

13 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

14 They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

15 "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

He was the Christ, the son of the living God.

God revealed to Peter that Jesus was the rock, the son of the living God, and upon that rock, Jesus would build his church in Matt 16:17-19.

17 Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. 18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build **my church**, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of **the kingdom of heaven**; whatever you bind on earth will be bound [Or

have been] in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." [Emphasis added].

The Lord finished this passage by using *church* and *kingdom* synonymously. In the church were the keys of the kingdom and not even the gates of Hades could prevail against it. Christ and his church fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the kingdom.

Once again, on the Mount of Transfiguration Matt 17:1-5, God recognized Jesus as the Christ:

1 After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. 2 There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. 3 Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus.

4 Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters – one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah."

5 While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!"

In 2 Peter 1:16-18, Peter recounted the transfiguration event and said that Christ received honor and glory and majesty, of which the apostles were eyewitnesses:

16 We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. 17 For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." 18 We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

Jesus Died as the Christ

Jesus who lived as the Christ, the son of God, died as the Christ, the son of God. According to his teaching is Matt 26:53-54, his death fulfilled the prophecies:

Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"

The fact that he could have called, and did not do so, more than twelve legions of angels so that the scriptures might be fulfilled, illustrates that even in death he commanded all authority as the son of God. If he were ever going to fight to establish an earthly kingdom, that was the time. However, John recorded in John 18:36: "36 Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.'" These two passages show that an earthly kingdom was not any part of God's eternal purpose as revealed in the prophets and made certain in Christ.

When Jesus died, the temple and the entire earth testified to his divine nature as the son of God. Even those watching on knew the significance of what they were witnessing. Matthew told the story in Matt 27:50-54:

50 And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

54 When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely he was the Son of God!"

When he appeared before Pilate, in John 18:37, for interrogation, Jesus claimed in the present tense to be king:

37 "You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

At the very close of the New Testament and the Bible, for that matter, Jesus claimed sovereignty and divinity. Jesus said in Rev 22:12-13; 16-17:

12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. . . .

16 "I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star."

17 The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

The Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Root and Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star—all of these come by the Lord's own testimony. Who can doubt that Jesus was the complete and perfect fulfillment of God's eternal purpose? Any man prophesying anything different will be a false prophet. And of those prophets and teachers, the Bible concludes in Rev 22:18-19:

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. 1 Peter 1:10-12: How did the prophets speak of what was to come? Who was pointing their way? What spirit told those who preach the gospel what to say?
2. 1 Cor 2:7-10: When was God's secret wisdom hidden? What happened because the rulers of this age did not understand it?
3. Acts 26:22-23: What did the prophets and Moses say would happen?
4. Acts 7:37-38: What did Moses tell the Israelites? What did Moses receive to pass on to us?
5. Deut 18:15-16: Who will God raise up from among their brothers?
6. Gen 3:15: What will the offspring of women do to the serpent?
7. Job 19:25: Who did Job know lived? Where would he stand?
8. Matt 5:17-18: What did Christ come to do with the Law and the prophets?
9. Luke 24:44: What must be fulfilled? Where can one find these things?
10. Acts 3:18-19: What did God foretell through the prophets?
11. Acts 13:32-35: What is the good news? Who would never decay?

12. Matt 1:20-23: What did the angel of the Lord tell Joseph? What did the angel say Jesus would do? Whom did the prophets say would give birth to a son? What was his name?
13. Matt 1:20-23: What did the angel tell Joseph? Why was the child to be named Jesus?
14. Isa 7:14-15: What sign would be given by the Lord himself?
15. Luke 1:30-33: What would Jesus be called? Whose throne was he given? How long would he reign? How long will his kingdom last?
16. Luke 1:68-70: Why is God to be praised? What has he raised up for us? Through whom did God say this long ago?
17. Luke 2:8-14: What was the good news? Who had been born? Why the celebration?
18. Matt 3:16-17: What did Jesus do immediately after he was baptized? What did God say?
19. John 1:29-31: What did John the Baptist call Jesus? What was Jesus to take away?
20. John 3:16-18: Who did God give for the world? What do believers receive? Why did God send his son?
21. John 3:31-36: How does one certify that God is truthful? How much of the Spirit did God give his son? Who has eternal life?
22. Matt 16:13-19: Who did people say that Jesus was? Who did Peter say that Jesus was? What did Christ say that he would build? What would not overcome it? Who has the keys of the kingdom?
23. Matt 17:1-5: What did God say about Jesus? To whom are we to listen?
24. 2 Peter 1:16-18: Of what were the apostles eyewitnesses? Whose voice did they hear?
25. Matt 26:53-54: Why could God put legions of angels at Jesus' disposal? Why didn't he?
26. Matt 27:50-54: What happened immediately upon the death of Jesus? What did the centurions say?
27. Rev 22:12-17: Who is Jesus? What happens to those who wash their robes? Who is outside the city?

4. The Certain Proof That Jesus, the Christ, Fulfilled All Prophecy

Factual evidence and eyewitness testimony certified that Jesus was the Christ. Proof rises through three stages: possibility, probability, and certainty. At the level of certainty, proof becomes positive beyond any doubt. Ordinarily, five or six identifying variables is enough to establish proof beyond any doubt, for at this point of proof, there is no variance left that would dispute it. The preponderance of evidence and testimony proves that Jesus was the Christ. In this context, Jesus fulfilled so many prophecies that his identity as the Christ is beyond dispute, and we believe, "You are the Christ, the son of the living God." It is as the Hebrew writer said in Heb 11:1: "11 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see."

Jesus Fulfilled the Prophecies Concerning the Messiah's Lineage and Birth

Hundred of years before Christ, the prophets foretold the facts of his lineage and birth in such details that when they happened, they established that Jesus was the Christ. These prophecies flowed like huge streams across the generations of the Old Testament and found a confluence in the person of Jesus, foretold to be the Christ and announced to be the Christ. This Christ, the King on the throne of David and the High Priest, after the order of Melchizedek, to reign forever, becomes the central theme of Bible prophecy, fulfilled in Jesus born in the flesh of woman but raised as the firstborn from the dead to sit at his heavenly Father's right hand eternally in heaven.

The Son of David and Son of Abraham

The promise of God from which all else follows is his promise to Abraham in Gen 22:17-18:

"I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

This promise extended the hope of eternal life to all nations through the offspring (seed) of Abraham.

When Christ was born, he came in the lineage of David and Abraham as recorded by Matthew in Matt 1:1: "1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham." This genealogy is the Lord's birth certificate. The apostles and prophets testified repeatedly that the one born *Jesus* is the Christ who fulfilled God's promise to Abraham. Paul made the case that Christ Jesus Fulfilled the promise to Abraham in Gal 3:13-14, 16:

13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." 14 He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. . . .

16 The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say "and to seeds," meaning many people, but "and to your seed," meaning one person, who is Christ.

Christ, as the son of Abraham, is not merely an academic point; it is the hope of all nations to inherit Abraham's promise, as Paul concluded in Gal 3:26-29:

26 You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, 27 for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor

Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

The messiah was also to come through the seed of David as stated in Ps 89:3-4:

3 You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one,
I have sworn to David my servant,
4 'I will establish your line forever
and make your throne firm through all generations.'"

This prophecy not only confirmed the line of Christ from David, but it also established Christ on the throne of David firm through all generations. The Jews, with all expectations from David onward, called for the Messiah to be the son of David. Therefore, the Gospel of Matthew begins in Matt 1:1: "1 A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David."

The prophecy that the Messiah would be of the lineage of David often repeats itself in the Old Testament. Ps 132:11-12 is one example:

11 The Lord swore an oath to David,
a sure oath that he will not revoke:
"One of your own descendants
I will place on your throne –
12 if your sons keep my covenant
and the statutes I teach them,
then their sons will sit
on your throne for ever and ever."

The apostles and prophets of the New Testament recognized that Jesus was the son of David and sat on his throne. Paul preached in Acts 13:23-24:

He testified concerning him: 'I have found David son of Jesse a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do.'
23 "From this man's descendants God has brought to Israel the Savior Jesus, as he promised.

Isaiah expressed the full nature of the Christ as one with the Spirit of God from the father of David, Jesse, in Isa 11:1-3:

11 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.
2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him –
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord –
3 and he will delight in the fear of the Lord.

Beyond the issue of the lineage of Christ, this passage foretells a pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon the Holy One beyond what has ever happened before or since. There are seven Spirits of God foretold here: the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of counsel, the Spirit of power, the Spirit of knowledge, and the Spirit of fear (respect) of the Lord. All of these, in their totality comprise the Spirit of God, or as John the Baptist explained in John 3:34-35, how Jesus was endowed with the full measure of the Holy

Spirit: “34 For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit.” Isaiah’s prophesy uses the parts for the whole of the unlimited and all-powerful Spirit of God—the Spirit that he gave his son without limit. The Revelation speaks of this all-powerful working of the Spirit in Rev 1:4-5 as being before the throne of God:

“Grace and peace to you from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits before his throne, 5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

The footnote translates *the seven spirits* as the *sevenfold Spirit*—a translation, which fits perfectly with Rev 3:1: “These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.” The sevenfold Spirit of God is what Isaiah prophesied and now at the close of the Bible we find Christ holding that which he was promised in the same measure that God promised it.

Paul confirmed this prophecy in Rom 1:1-4:

1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— 2 the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures 3 regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, 4 and who **through the Spirit** of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord. [Emphasis added.]

Christ as One Born of a Virgin in Isa 7:14-15

Isaiah prophesied that the Christ would be born of a virgin, an event that would require miraculous intervention with the laws of nature. Isaiah prophesied in Isa 7:14: “4 Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.” Matthew recorded the fulfillment of this prophecy in Matt 1:22-23:

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 "The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" – which means, "God with us."

Christ Born in Bethlehem in Mic 5:2 and Lived in Nazareth

In addition to foretelling the nature of Christ’s birth as a virgin birth, the prophets told where the Christ would be born and where he would live. Micah prophesied in Mic 5:2:

2 "But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
though you are small among the clans of Judah,
out of you will come for me
one who will be ruler over Israel,
whose origins are from of old,
from ancient times."

Jesus lived before Micah prophesied that the one from of old and from ancient times would come out of Bethlehem. John wrote that Christ was in the beginning with God in John 1:1-2 : “1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.” Jesus himself said that he was before Abraham in John 8:58: “‘58 I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’” In Matt 2:3-6: the wise men quoted this same passage from Micah to say that the Christ would be born in Bethlehem.

Matt 2:22-23 asserts that the Lord's living in Nazareth fulfilled what was said by the prophets:
Having been warned in a dream, he withdrew to the district of Galilee, 23 and he went and lived in a town called Nazareth. So was fulfilled what was said through the prophets: "He will be called a Nazarene."

The Killing of the Male Children by Herod in Jer 31:15

Jeremiah foretold the slaughter of the male children by Herod in Jer 31:15:

15 This is what the Lord says:
"A voice is heard in Ramah,
mourning and great weeping,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because her children are no more."

Showing the fulfillment of this prophecy, Matthew wrote in Matt 2:16-18:

16 When Herod realized that he had been outwitted by the Magi, he was furious, and he gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were two years old and under, in accordance with the time he had learned from the Magi. 17 Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

18 "A voice is heard in Ramah,
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more."

Jesus Fulfilled the Prophecies of John the Baptist as the Forerunner in Isa 40:3-5

Isaiah prophesied the Messiah would have a forerunner to declare his coming and to prepare a way for him. He called the path that the Messiah was to follow a highway for our God, signaling the divinity of Jesus. Isaiah prophesied in Isa 40:3:

3 A voice of one calling:
"In the desert prepare
the way for the Lord;
make straight in the wilderness
a highway for our God."

Matthew describes the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy in Matt 3:1-6:

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him.'"

4 John's clothes were made of camel's hair, and he had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all

Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

John was a remarkable fulfillment to the prophecy of Isaiah, but equally remarkable is how he also fulfilled the prophecy of the angel of the Lord who appeared in Luke 1:13-17 to Zechariah, John's father:

13 But the angel said to him: "Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you are to give him the name John. 14 He will be a joy and delight to you, and many will rejoice because of his birth, 15 for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. He is never to take wine or other fermented drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from birth. 16 Many of the people of Israel will he bring back to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous – to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

The very appearance of John, as described beforehand, established Jesus as the Christ, the son of God.

Jesus Fulfilled the Prophecy of Dan 2:36-47 that the Christ and His Kingdom Would Come in the Days of the Roman Kings

Daniel's prophesy, embedded in his interpretation of Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar's dream, foretold with exactness the time and nature of the coming of the Lord and his kingdom. This prophecy strikes down the fundamental assumption of premillennialists that Christ, the king and his kingdom have not yet come. They say that the Jews thwarted his first attempt to establish a kingdom by rejecting him as king. If that were so, Daniel was wrong, and the God of Heaven and Earth was wrong. Nebuchadnezzar himself claimed the prophecy as the work of the God of gods: "47 The king said to Daniel, 'Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a revealer of mysteries, for you were able to reveal this mystery.'" How can the God of gods and Lord of Lords be wrong?

The dream was one of a large statue that Daniel described in Dan 2:31-33:

31 "You looked, O king, and there before you stood a large statue – an enormous, dazzling statue, awesome in appearance. 32 The head of the statue was made of pure gold, its chest and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, 33 its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of baked clay.

Daniel proceeded to explain the dream in Dan 2:36-38 by giving meaning to each part of the statue. Nebuchadnezzar was the most prominent of the kings portrayed. Daniel said, "You are the head of gold:

36 "This was the dream, and now we will interpret it to the king. 37 You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; 38 in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. You are that head of gold.

Thus, the Babylonian Kingdom was the first kingdom, in marking the time set forth. The kingdom to follow was the one coming immediately after – the Persian Kingdom beginning about 640 BC. [Estimated times are the times that these kingdoms began their domination of Jerusalem.] The Persian Kingdom was the chest and arms of silver on the statue in the dream. In Dan 2:39a, Daniel said:

39 "After you, another kingdom will rise, inferior to yours.

After the Persian kingdom was the Macedonian kingdom of Alexander the Great, beginning from about 375 BC. Daniel spoke of this kingdom in Dan 2:39b:

Next, a third kingdom, one of bronze, will rule over the whole earth.

The last kingdom in Daniel's interpretation was the iron kingdom of the Roman Empire, ruling Jerusalem from 50 AD. Daniel's prophecy spoke to its strength and power, but also to its division, as a people that cannot be united. In Dan 2:40-43, Daniel said:

40 Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron – for iron breaks and smashes everything – and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. 41 Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. 42 As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. 43 And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

Daniel signals the end of the times represented in the dream the word, *finally*, as he discusses the Roman Empire. In the next paragraph, Dan 2:44-45, Daniel, begins by setting the stage for the advent of a kingdom that will never be destroyed.

44 "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever. 45 This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands – a rock that broke the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver and the gold to pieces.

That in the time of the Roman kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, strikes again at the heart of the premillennialists' doctrine, which still waits for the kingdom to come in the future. To accept the idea of a future earthly kingdom is to reject this prophecy and to deny the power of the God of heaven. The kingdom of Christ transcends all the earthly kingdoms, crushing them with the power of the gospel. The rock cut out of the mountain is Christ (not made by hands).

The fulfillment of this prophecy testifies to Christ as Lord and King over an eternal kingdom. All of this happened in the days of the Roman kings. Luke recorded in Luke 3:1-2:

3 In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar – when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and Traconitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene— 2 during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert.

Even Nebuchadnezzar knew that God, and not man, makes the meaning of His prophecies. In Dan 2:47 the king said to Daniel: "Surely your God is the God of gods and the Lord of kings and a **revealer of mysteries**, for you were able to reveal this mystery." [Emphasis added.]

2 Peter 1:19 becomes a fitting conclusion to this lesson:

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Heb 11:1-2: How do hope and certainty work to establish faith?

2. Gen 22:17-18: What did God promise Abraham? Who would be blessed by this promise?
3. Matt 1:1: Name two ancestors of Christ.
4. Gal 3:13-14, 16: What did Christ do to fulfill the promise to Abraham? Who are the seed of Abraham?
5. Gal 3:26-29: Who are the sons of God? How do people clothe themselves with Christ? What are those who belong to Christ?
6. Ps 89:3-4: How long would the line of David last? How long would his throne last?
7. Ps 132:11-12: What oath did the Lord swear? Who would sit on his throne?
8. Acts 13:22-24: From where did the Savior Jesus come?
9. Isa 11:1-3: What are the seven Spirits? What was Christ's relationship to Jesse, father of David?
10. 1Rom 1:1-4: What qualified Jesus to be the Son of God?
11. Isa 7:14-15: What was to be unusual about Christ's birth? What would they call the Lord?
12. Matt 1:22-23: What does Immanuel mean?
13. Mic 5:2: From where was the Messiah to come? How was Christ before Abraham?
14. Matt 2:22-23: Where did Jesus go with his parents to live? What prophecy did this fulfill?
15. Jer 31:15: What did Jeremiah say about children?
16. Matt 2:16-18: What king gave the orders to kill all the boys two years old and under?
17. Matt 3:1-6: Who was the forerunner of Jesus?
18. Luke 1:13-17: What did the angel say to Zechariah, John's father?
19. Dan 2:31-43: What was Nebuchadnezzar's dream? What were the four kingdoms?
20. Dan 2:44-45: Whose kingdom would never be destroyed? What crushed the earthly kingdoms?
21. Dan 2:46: Who is the God of gods and the Lord of lords? Who is the revealer of mysteries?

5. The Mission and Work of Jesus Fulfilled the Prophecies

As stated in the previous lesson, Christ made more certain the word of prophecy, as he fulfilled each prophecy by the events of his birth and life. Heb 11:1-2 states: "11 Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." When Jesus fulfilled everything, it made us "certain of what we do not see." Thus far, these lessons have shown Christ as the son of David and Abraham, born of the Virgin Mary, in Bethlehem in the day of the Roman kings. He also lived in Nazareth, following a childhood where Herod killed all the boys under two years old. As an adult, John the Baptist was his forerunner, also fulfilling the prophecies.

This lesson will further strengthen the faith of Christians by showing Jesus made more certain the word of prophecies by fulfilling them in his teaching and work, proving himself to be the son of God.

Jesus Power to Heal the Sick Fulfilled Isa 53:4-7

The Messiah was to come to take up the infirmities and sorrows of humankind. Isa 53:4-7 prophesied:

4 Surely he took up our infirmities
and carried our sorrows,
yet we considered him stricken by God,
smitten by him, and afflicted.
5 But he was pierced for our transgressions,
he was crushed for our iniquities;
the punishment that brought us peace was upon him,
and by his wounds we are healed.
6 We all, like sheep, have gone astray,
each of us has turned to his own way;
and the Lord has laid on him
the iniquity of us all.

Two points of note stand out in this prophecy: Jesus would take up our infirmities and carry our sorrows, and those to whom he came would pierce him and crush him, but this punishment of the Lord would bring us peace and healing. The miracles of healing in their own right attest to the divinity of Christ. However, his promised healing and peace fulfill the prophecies. The Psalmist wrote in Ps 103:1-5:

1 Praise the Lord, O my soul;
all my inmost being, praise his holy name.
2 Praise the Lord, O my soul,
and forget not all his benefits —
3 who forgives all your sins
and heals all your diseases,
4 who redeems your life from the pit
and crowns you with love and compassion,
5 who satisfies your desires with good things

so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

His suffering, piercing, and wounding made possible all that he blessed us with physically and spiritually. Therefore, both his wounding and our healing fulfilled the prophecies as Matt 8:16-17 told us clearly:

16 When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirits with a word and healed all the sick. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

"He took up our infirmities
and carried our diseases."

That Christ was forecast to suffer and be wounded shows that the outcome of the cross was in God's plan from the very beginning, making God's plan certain and true, and not an afterthought or substitute as premillennialists claim.

The Nature of Christ's Kingdom Fulfilled Mic 7:6

Micah prophesied that the spiritual kingdom of Christ would destroy the harmony existing in human relationships of this present world. Mic 7:6 teaches:

6 For a son dishonors his father,
a daughter rises up against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law —
a man's enemies are the members of his own household.

In Matt 10:34-36, Jesus used this passage to confirm the nature of his kingdom, thus fulfilling the prophecy:

34 "Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. 35 For I have come to turn
"a man against his father,
a daughter against her mother,
a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law —
36 a man's enemies will be the members of his own household."

This passage makes the word of the prophet more certain by fulfilling it in Christ and the nature of his kingdom.

Jesus Received the Spirit of God and Fulfilled Isa 42:1-4

Isaiah described in prophecy how God would put his Spirit on Jesus and how he will bring hope and justice to the nations. The prophecy is recorded in Isa 42:1-4:

1 "Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen one in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him
and he will bring justice to the nations.
2 He will not shout or cry out,
or raise his voice in the streets.
3 A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out.
In faithfulness he will bring forth justice;

4 he will not falter or be discouraged
till he establishes justice on earth.
In his law the islands will put their hope."

Matthew said that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy in Matt 12:15-21:

15 Aware of this, Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, 16 warning them not to tell who he was. 17 This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

18 "Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.

19 He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.

20 A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he leads justice to victory.

21 In his name the nations will put their hope."

In addition to making the prophecy more certain by its fulfillment, the Old and New Testaments both teach, "He will proclaim justice to the nations." And "He leads justice to victory." The reed [Christ] though bruised will stand and the wick [Christ] though smoldering will burn brightly. Once again, the nature of Christ's victory on the cross leaves no room for a premillennial teaching. In a retrospect, Peter described our victory in his despair in 1 Peter 2:23-25:

23 When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. 25 For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

Jesus Spoke in Parables and Fulfilled Isa 6:9-10

Isaiah prophesied about the very nature and substance of the teaching of Christ and his hearers response in Isa 6:9-10:

9 He said, "Go and tell this people:
"Be ever hearing, but never understanding;
be ever seeing, but never perceiving."
10 Make the heart of this people calloused;
make their ears dull
and close their eyes.
Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts,
and turn and be healed."

To this description the Psalmist added the method of teaching—parables—in Ps 78:2-3:

2 I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter hidden things, things from of old –
3 what we have heard and known,
what our fathers have told us.

In Matt 13:11-15, Jesus, confirmed the prophecy of Isaiah asserting that the secrets of heaven were revealed in his parables:

11 He replied, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. 12 Whoever has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him. 13 This is why I speak to them in parables:

"Though seeing, they do not see;
though hearing, they do not hear or understand.

14 In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah:

"You will be ever hearing but never understanding;
you will be ever seeing but never perceiving.

15 For this people's heart has become calloused;
they hardly hear with their ears,
and they have closed their eyes.

Otherwise they might see with their eyes,
hear with their ears,
understand with their hearts
and turn, and I would heal them.'

That the parables were foretold and fulfilled is reiterated in Matt 13:34-35:

34 Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable. 35 So was fulfilled what was spoken through the prophet:

"I will open my mouth in parables,
I will utter things hidden since the creation of the world."

The Nature of the Generation to Whom Jesus Preached Fulfilled Isa 29:13

In Isa 29:13, Isaiah had described the nature of the generation to whom Jesus would preach:

13 The Lord says:

"These people come near to me with their mouth
and honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

5 Their worship of me
is made up only of rules taught by men.

In Matt 15:7-9, Matthew records Jesus affirming this prophecy and directing its teaching to contemporary Jews:

7 You hypocrites! Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you:

8 "These people honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are far from me.

9 They worship me in vain;
their teachings are but rules taught by men."

The Triumphal Entry Fulfilled Zech 9:9

The triumphal entry to Jerusalem, an event no one could imagine, forecast this unusual appearance of a triumphant Lord and King in Zech 9:9:

9 Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion!
Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem!
See, your king comes to you,
righteous and having salvation,
gentle and riding on a donkey,

Matt 21:2-5 records the exact happening of the Lord's entry:

"Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, tell him that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away."

4 This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

5 "Say to the Daughter of Zion,
'See, your king comes to you,
gentle and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'"

Matthew, the Lord, by inclusion, and Isaiah saw and testified to what the Jews could not accept and what premillennialists of today cannot accept: "See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey."

The rejection of the Jews of old and the Zionists of today, who look for the worldly might and power of David, mirrors itself in the materialistic views of contemporary premillennialists, who also look for an earthly kingdom of material might to occupy the land of David. Paul described the dilemma that applies to all three groups in 1 Cor 1:18-25:

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

20 Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

Jesus Rejection by the Jews Fulfilled Ps 118:22-24

A fundamental principle of prophecy and one basic to the New Testament gospel is that the Jews would reject the Christ. Premillennialists, in contrast, argue that this rejection was

unexpected; for in their mind the Christ was to re-establish David's earthly kingdom. In their minds, God's plan failed and resulted in the church, established in an interim period until Christ could come yet again at sometime future to 2010. Yet, prophecy foretells the rejection of Jesus as the Christ, and the gospel writers testify that Jesus, the Christ, fulfilled this prophecy. The fulfillment of the prophecy makes certain that Christ is the capstone [cornerstone] of the kingdom of God. In Christ's rejection, the kingdom was born "in the day the Lord has made."

Ps 118:22-24 reads:

22 The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone [cornerstone];
23 the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
24 This is the day the Lord has made;
let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Prospectively, Jesus applied the prophecy to himself and to his kingdom in Matt 21:42-44:

42 Jesus said to them, "Have you never read in the Scriptures:

"The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone [cornerstone];
the Lord has done this,
and it is marvelous in our eyes'?"

43 "Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. 44 He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

Retrospectively, Peter in Peter 2:4-10, applied the prophetic teaching of David and Isaiah to the building of the kingdom on the foundation of Christ, the chief cornerstone. In 1 Peter 2: 4-5, the spiritual house of God is being built:

4 As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him – 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 2:6 quotes Isa 28:16 as fulfilled:

6 For in Scripture it says:

"See, I lay a stone in Zion, The Word of Prophecy Made More Certain The Mission and Work of Jesus Fulfilled the Prophecies 7
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame."

Peter repeats the teaching of the Lord that the Jews would reject him by quoting Ps 118:22 in 1 Peter 2:7:

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe,
"The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone,"

Thus, the Jews and the premillennialists reject Jesus as the victorious Christ, and they fall, stumbling on Jesus, the resurrected and victorious King, according to Isa 8:14, quoted in 1 Peter 2:8:

8 and,

"A stone that causes men to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

One must ask, when did Christ become King? Was it at the cross? Or was it at some time distant in the future. Peter answered the question, looking back to the cross, just as Christ answered the question looking forward to the cross. In 1 Peter 2:9, we are that kingdom that makes the prophecy more certain:

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

Christ Exalted to the Right Hand of God Fulfilled Ps 110:10

When Christ died, he was exalted to the right hand of God where he reigns now as King of kings and Lord of lords. As with the other facts of Jesus' life, mission, and work, the prophets foretold the specific nature of his exaltation. In Ps 110:10, the Psalmist wrote:

10 The Lord says to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet."

When did Christ sit at the right hand of God. He answered this question when talking to the Pharisees in Matt 22:41-46:

41 While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, 42 "What do you think about the Christ? Whose son is he?"

"The son of David," they replied.

43 He said to them, "How is it then that David, speaking by the Spirit, calls him 'Lord'? For he says,

44 "'The Lord said to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand
until I put your enemies
under your feet." '

45 If then David calls him 'Lord,' how can he be his son?" 46 No one could say a word in reply, and from that day on no one dared to ask him any more questions.

Therefore, prior to his death Jesus claimed to be the one who fulfilled David's prophecy. Following his death the apostles clearly stated that he was at the right hand of the father and exalted above heaven and earth. Peter preached this prophecy by David in Acts 2:32-36:

32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. 34 For David did not ascend to heaven,

and yet he said,

"The Lord said to my Lord:

'Sit at my right hand

35 until I make your enemies

a footstool for your feet."

36 "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."

Paul wrote of what happened at the resurrection of Christ in Eph 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Finally, John described the present status of Christ and our present relationship with the Lord in Rev 1:5-6:

And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the **ruler of the kings of the earth.**

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made **us to be a kingdom** and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Heb 11:1-2: For what do we hope? Of what are we certain?
2. Isa 53:4-7: Who takes up our infirmities? Who would be pierced and crushed for us?
3. Ps 103:1-5: Who forgives all our sins? Who heals all our diseases?
4. Matt 8:16-17: What fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah?
5. Mic 7:6: What conflicts did Micah predict? From where do the enemies of God's people sometime come?
6. Matt 10:34-36: What did Jesus bring to the earth?
7. Isa 42:1-4: What different qualities of the Holy Spirit were to come in the prophesied Messiah? The Word of Prophecy Made More Certain The Mission and Work of Jesus Fulfilled the Prophecies
9
8. Matt 12:15-21: What did God promise to put on Jesus? What does a bruised reed and a smoldering wick mean?
9. 1 Peter 2:23-25: How did Jesus respond to abuse? What did Jesus do for us? To whom must lost sheep return?
10. Isa 6:9-10: What was to be the nature of those who would hear Jesus?
11. Ps 78:2-3: What teaching device was he to use to make things clear to them?
12. Matt 13:11-15: Why did Jesus say that he spoke in parables? To whom were the secrets of the kingdom of heaven given?

13. Matt 13:34-35: What was the exclusive teaching method of Jesus to the crowd?
14. Isa 29:13: How did Isaiah describe those who would listen to Jesus?
15. Matt 15:7-9: What kind of worship did Jesus call this?
16. Zech 9:9: How would the Messiah come?
17. Matt 21:2-5: Who came riding on a donkey?
18. 1 Cor 1:18-25: Why did the Jews refuse Jesus? What is the wisdom of God?
19. Ps 118:22-24: What happened to the stone that the builders rejected? What day did the Lord make?
20. Matt 21:42-44: When the Jews rejected the capstone, to whom did the kingdom go?
21. 1 Peter 2: 4-5: How does Peter describe Christians? Into what are they built?
22. 1 Peter 2:9: What are the terms used by Peter to describe Christians?
23. Ps 110:10: Where was the Lord to sit?
24. Matt 22:41-46: Where did Jesus say that he would sit?
25. Acts 2:32-36: Where did Peter say that Jesus was sitting?
26. Eph 1:19-23: Where did Paul say Jesus was sitting?
27. Rev 1:5-6: Who is the ruler of the kings of the earth? What did Jesus make us to be

6. The Christ, KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

Previous lessons included two principles, among others: God interprets prophecies, and God would set up his kingdom in the time of the Roman kings. This lesson will contend that the prophecies forecast in the Old Testament find fulfillment and affirmation in Christ, making more certain the word of prophecy, and proving that God raised Christ from the dead to be King of kings and Lord of lords.

Christ, the King, Foretold to David

The prophecies begin with David whose offspring would be the king, succeeding to David's throne. Samuel told David in 2 Sam 7:12-13 that his offspring would succeed him, that God would establish his kingdom, that the house would bear the name of God, and God would establish the throne forever:

"12 When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever."

According to 2 Sam 7:16, the throne of this kingdom would endure forever and would be established forever: "16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

God, the father, confirmed this teaching, when he spoke to David in Ps 110:1-2:

1 The Lord says to my Lord:

"Sit at my right hand
until I make your enemies
a footstool for your feet."

2 The Lord will extend your mighty scepter from Zion;
you will rule in the midst of your enemies.

The Lord God said that David's Lord, who would be the Christ, would rule with his mighty scepter, from the right hand of God, but in the midst of his enemies. The rule of Christ would begin while his enemies were still active in the world. From David's throne at the right hand of God, Christ would rule with his mighty scepter (the emblem of his regal authority). The apostles Paul explained exactly when the rule of the Christ began in Eph 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

When did God seat Christ at his right hand? When he raised him from the dead. When did Christ wield the scepter of David's power? When God raised Christ from the dead. When did Christ rule from among his enemies? When he ruled over all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, in this **present world**. Any doctrine, which teaches that Christ has yet to sit on his throne or yet to rule over his enemies, is false.

Christ to Rule over All and above All from His Resurrection Onward

David's prophecy in Ps 2:1-8 made it clear the Lord would rule from the throne of David while earthly conditions exist in their temporal form. Ps 2:1-3 establishes the conditions that describe Christ's rule:

- 1 Why do the nations conspire
and the peoples plot in vain?
- 2 The kings of the earth take their stand
and the rulers gather together
against the Lord
and against his Anointed One.
- 3 "Let us break their chains," they say,
"and throw off their fetters."

During the time of the rule of Christ, the king, nations conspire, people plot, and the rulers are against the Lord, who is here the Anointed One. These can only be contemporary conditions of the Christian age and not some mythical and unscriptural reign after a second coming. The point previously made is now more certain: Christ was raised from the dead and rules as king over a contemporary world now.

To the contemporary conditions of the world during the King's reign, Ps 2:4-6 adds the location and status of the King:

- 4 The One enthroned in heaven laughs;
the Lord scoffs at them.
- 5 Then he rebukes them in his anger
and terrifies them in his wrath, saying,
- 6 "I have installed my King
on Zion, my holy hill."

Christ is enthroned in heaven, just as Paul described in Eph 1:19-23. He is not a king in waiting for a future war and victory, as premillennialists assert. He is now laughing, scoffing, rebuking, and terrifying. He is an enthroned King and rules from God's holy hill Zion.

As the Psalm proceeds in Psalm 2:7-8, David describes circumstances that prove beyond any doubt the Jesus is now King on his throne and not waiting for a king and a future 1,000 year reign:

- 7 I will proclaim the decree of the Lord:
He said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.
- 8 Ask of me,
and I will make the nations your inheritance,
the ends of the earth your possession.

No false teacher can dispute that this entire Psalm applies to our contemporary world as it began with the resurrection of the Lord; for Paul asserted the fulfillment of this prophecy and named the Psalm 2 in Acts 13:32-34:

32 "We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers 33 he has fulfilled for us, their children, by **raising up Jesus**. As it is written in the second Psalm:

"You are my Son;
today I have become your Father.'

34 The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words:

"I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.' [Emphasis added].

Christ reigns as King, on the throne of David, over his kingdom now.

Christ To Rule with an Iron Scepter

David introduced a characteristic of Christ's reign as King that rules out any future 1,000 year reign on earth after his resurrection. In Ps 2:9, David wrote:

9 You will rule them with an iron scepter;
you will dash them to pieces like pottery."

Christ himself quoted this prophecy and showed how it is fulfilled in the church in Rev 2:26-28:

26 To him who overcomes and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations –

27 'He will rule them with an iron scepter;
he will dash them to pieces like pottery' –

just as I have received authority from my Father. 28 I will also give him the morning star.

The Lord is speaking through John to a real church, Thyatira, during a real time, 96AD. The authority and rule is to those who overcome and do his will to the end. Taking out the parenthetical statement of David's prophecy, Christ promised those that overcome authority over nations, just as he had received [past tense] authority from his Father. When did Christ receive his authority? When God raised him to sit at his right hand, according to Eph 1:20-21:

20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

Christ affirmed that this was, indeed, the case, when after his resurrection and before his ascension, he had already received all authority in heaven and on earth. Matt 28:18 reads: "18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." The iron scepter and all authority stand inextricably connected from the resurrection forward. The Lord promised that Christians would share in this rule and authority in Matt 19:28:

28 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Again, when was the renewal of all things? When the Son of Man sits of his glorious throne is when all things are renewed. He sat on his throne when God raised him from the dead. That the renewal included the followers of Christ is evident and reinforced by Paul in Titus 3:4-7:

4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and **renewal** by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. [Emphasis added.]

In Rev 12:5, the son is the one with the iron scepter and the one snatched up (caught up) to his throne: " 5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne."

The prophecy of David in Psalms 2 completes its meaning in Christ's resurrection to rule at the right hand of God. There is no timidity, weakness, or incompleteness in the reign of Christ. He is ruling with his scepter in Rev 19:15-16:

Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

God's plan announced in David's prophecy finds powerful meaning in the present tense statements of this passage: *out of his mouth comes a sharp sword; he treads the winepress of God; he has this name written.* Who can doubt that Jesus Christ the Lord is now reigning with his scepter – *KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

The Christ to be King and High Priest

The prophecies of the Old Testament foretold the Christ as King over God's eternal kingdom and the Christ as high priest sitting on his priestly throne, administering spiritual service. When he was raised from the dead, Christ fulfilled both of these prophecies.

Jesus, King on David's Throne

The prophecies, foretelling that Christ would be of David's seed and sit on David's throne forever, began with Samuel prophesying for God to a young king, David, in 1 Chron 17:12-14:

He is the one who will build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. 13 I will be his father, and he will be my son. I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor. 14 I will set him over my house and my kingdom forever; his throne will be established forever."

God also includes the details of Christ's rejection and suffering. Yet, 2 Sam 7:14-16 assures that David's kingdom would endure and that his throne would remain forever:

"14 I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with the rod of men, with floggings inflicted by men. 15 But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. 16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever."

This is the prophecy that Ps 2:7 repeated, asserting the Christ was to be the son of God, on the throne of David:

7 I will proclaim the decree of the Lord:
He said to me, "You are my Son;
today I have become your Father."

Heb 1:5 is a specific fulfillment of this prophecy in Jesus:

5 For to which of the angels did God ever say,
"You are my Son;
today I have become your Father"?

Heb 1:8 describes Jesus as the son who fulfills Ps 45:6. The prophecy in Ps 45:6 reads:

Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever;
a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom.

Heb 1:8 directly teaches the fulfillment is in Jesus:

8 But about the Son he says,
"Your throne, O God, will last for ever and ever,
and righteousness will be the scepter of your kingdom.

There can be no mistake about it: Jesus was the son of God raised to the throne of David, ruling over God's kingdom forever.

Jesus, High Priest on Melchizedek's Throne

In addition to being King on David's throne, Christ was raised to sit on the throne as high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

The prophecy begins in Ps 110:4-6:

4 The Lord has sworn
and will not change his mind:
"You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek."
5 The Lord is at your right hand;
he will crush kings on the day of his wrath.
6 He will judge the nations, heaping up the dead
and crushing the rulers of the whole earth."

In Heb 5:5-6, the prophecy of the Old Testament finds its exact meaning in Christ as son and high priest:

5 So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him,
"You are my Son;
today I have become your Father."
6 And he says in another place,
"You are a priest forever,
in the order of Melchizedek."

The Hebrew writer is designating Christ as the fulfillment of these prophecies by the time that he is writing Hebrews. Christ is high priest forever.

This study has amply proven that Christ became king on his throne at his resurrection from the dead. The Bible is just as clear about exactly when he sat on his priestly throne.

Jesus Christ: Priest upon His Throne

The issue of when Jesus sat upon his royal throne as king and on his priestly throne as high priest stands at the heart of premillennialism. Does the Bible teach that Jesus is yet to come to establish an earthly kingdom and reign over it in Jerusalem for a thousand years?

Zechariah, God's inspired spokesman, wrote about the work of the Messiah. In Zech. 6:12-13, through His prophet Zechariah God struck a deathblow to the doctrine of premillennialism. This doctrine holds that Christ is yet to come to reign over his kingdom on earth for the 1,000 years. Zechariah wrote in Zech 6:11-13:

11 Take the silver and gold and make a **crown**, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak. 12 Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the **Branch**, and he will branch out from his place and build the **temple** of the Lord. 13 It is he who will build the temple of the Lord, and he will be clothed with **majesty and will sit and rule on his throne. And he will be a priest on his throne.** And there will be **harmony between the two.**' [Emphasis added.]

Premillennialists teach that Christ functions as a priest now, as Heb. 4:15 clearly shows, but that he is not reigning as king now. They say that Christ will begin his reign as king when he returns. But Zechariah said, "He will be a priest upon his throne." At the same time Christ serves as high priest, he sits upon his throne. If Christ is high priest now, he is king now. If he is king now, his kingdom *exists now* here upon the earth and *now* in heaven.

God told Zechariah to place two crowns on the head of Joshua, the high priest in Zech. 6:10-11:

10 "Take [silver and gold] from the exiles Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah, who have arrived from Babylon. Go the same day to the house of Josiah son of Zephaniah. 11 Take the silver and gold and make a crown, and set it on the head of the high priest, Joshua son of Jehozadak.

Joshua, with the two crowns was a type of the Branch—the Christ. The two crowns represent the two positions filled by the true Branch. The two-tiered crown represents the simultaneous kingship and high priesthood of Christ.

This is the prophecy. The fulfillment of the prophecy begins in Luke 1:32-33 where the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary:

32 He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."

Peter said God's prophecy was fulfilled when Christ was raised to sit on David's throne: Acts 2:29-33:

29 "Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. 30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his **throne**. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the **resurrection** of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 **God has raised this Jesus to life**, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 **Exalted to the right hand of God**, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. [Emphasis added.]

Peter summarized the full meaning of the Messianic prophecies in 1 Peter 2:4-5 as they are fulfilled in those who come to him:

As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him— 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

As we come to the Lord, we are built into a spiritual house—a holy priesthood, according to Peter who quotes the prophet Isaiah in Isa 28:16

"See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame."

In 1 Peter 2:7-8, Peter quotes Ps 118:22 and Isa 8:14, where those who do not believe and who disobey reject the eternal Christ:

7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious.

But to those who do not believe,

"The stone the builders rejected
has become the capstone,"

8 and,

"A stone that causes men to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the message – which is also what they were destined for.

Peter's conclusion is that 1 Pet 2:9-10 makes forever the church of Christ the temple of God with Christians as the chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation (kingdom):

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

The word of prophecy can never be more certain: Christians are now the people of God. All speculations about a future kingdom are private interpretations and false teachings, demeaning God and his word and rejecting the Christ—KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. 2 Sam 7:12-14: When would God raise up David's offspring? How long would his kingdom last?
2. Ps 110:1-2: Where does the Lord sit? Where are his enemies?
3. Eph 1:19-23: What happened when God exerted his mighty strength? Where is the right hand of God? What is the fullness of Christ?
4. Ps 2:1-3: What are the conditions of Christ's rule? Who is against the Lord and the anointed one?
5. Ps 2:4-6: What is the Lord doing? Where is he?
6. Psalm 2:7-8: What does the Lord inherit? What does he possess?

7. Acts 13:32-34: By what did God fulfill his promise to the fathers? What Old Testament passage did Paul quote? What is a fact stated in verse 34?
8. Ps 2:9: With what will Christ rule? To what are the Lord's enemies compared?
9. Rev 2:26-28: To what church is Christ speaking? What do those who overcome receive? What Old Testament prophecy does Christ quote?
10. Matt 28:18: When and where did Christ say that he received all authority?
11. Matt 19:28: When will the followers of Christ sit on their thrones?
12. Titus 3:4-7: When and how did Christ save us?
13. Rev 12:5: Who was snatched up (caught up) to God? With what would he rule?
14. Rev 19:15-16: What comes out of the mouth of the Lord? What does he do with it? What name is on his robe and thigh?
15. 1 Chron 17:12-14: How long will the son's throne last? Over whose house and kingdom does the son sit?
16. 2 Sam 7:14-16: How will people receive the son?
17. Heb 1:8: What prophecy is fulfilled by this passage? What does God say about his son?
18. Ps 110:4-6: Where is this passage fulfilled? How long will the son be a priest? After what order is Christ's priesthood?
19. Zech 6:12-13: What two things will the branch do on his throne? Who will build the temple of the Lord?
20. Heb. 4:15: Who is priest on his throne?
21. Luke 1:32-33: Whose throne was Mary's son to receive? How long will his kingdom last?
22. Acts 2:29-33: When did David's descendant sit upon his throne?

7. Christ the King and Christians in the Kingdom of God

The last lesson showed Christ making the obedient believers in the church of Christ the temple of God. There these Christians are the chosen people, a royal priesthood, and a holy nation (kingdom). In 1 Peter 2:9-10, Peter wrote:

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

That lesson concluded that Christians are now the people of God in his holy nation. All speculations about a future kingdom are private interpretations and false teachings, demeaning God and his word and rejecting the Christ—King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

From the very beginning of the New Testament, John the Baptist and Jesus himself prophesied the imminent establishment of the church of Christ, whose members are citizens in the Kingdom of God. God raised Christ to sit at his right hand, and 50 days later, on the Pentecost after that resurrection, God added to the church daily such as were saved (Acts 2:47). This lesson explores the New Testament prophecies of the kingdom to come and the scriptures that fulfill these prophecies on the day of Pentecost after Christ's resurrection.

Jesus and John Prophesied That the Kingdom Was Near

The New Testament opens with John the Baptist, the promised forerunner, preaching and prophesying that the kingdom of heaven was near. Matthew records one occasion of this prophecy in Matt 3:1-3:

3 In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea 2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." 3 This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah:

"A voice of one calling in the desert,
'Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him."

John prophesied that the kingdom of heaven was near, and Matthew teaches that this is the prophecy of Isaiah, calling for a forerunner to the Messiah.

In Matt 4:15-17, Jesus himself began teaching that the kingdom of heaven was near, and Matthew said that that fulfilled Isa 9:1-2:

15 "Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, along the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—
16 the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned."

17 From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near."

These events marked the advent of the Christ coming to establish his kingdom. In Matt 11:9-14, Jesus taught that the work beginning with John was preparatory to the kingdom of heaven and that it was forcefully advanced and forceful men would lay hold on it:

9 Then what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is the one about whom it is written:

"I will send my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you."

. . . 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John. 14 And if you are willing to accept it, he is the Elijah who was to come.

A parallel, to what was happening in the kingdom of heaven that Jesus and John pronounced as *near*, is the United States during its struggle to establish its own nation. Forceful men were forcefully advancing the nation when they signed the Declaration of Independence and went to war against the British. Indeed, these men were laying hold of the United States of America, which they did not establish until later when the several states ratified the *Constitution*.

Jesus and John preached that the kingdom was near and forcefully advanced it, and forceful men lay hold of it. The point is that Jesus and John were all about establishing the kingdom of heaven. That is what they came for, and that is what they did.

Jesus Prophesied the Church and Kingdom in the Lives of the Apostles

In addition to Jesus and John forcefully advancing a kingdom that they said was near, Jesus taught that the kingdom would come in the lives of the apostles and in the lives of some of the people living at the time that he preached.

When Peter Was to Use the Keys of the Kingdom

In Matt 16:18, the Lord told Peter: '18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it.' The gates of Hades would not overcome the church that he would build. Immediately afterward, in Matt 16:19-20, Jesus uses the word, *kingdom*, in a way synonymous to the word, *church*: "19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." Therefore, the church, the kingdom would be in the time of the life of Peter to whom Christ gave the keys of the kingdom.

When They Were to Participate with Christ in the Lord's Supper

In Matt 26:26-29, Jesus authorized the Lord's Supper as a permanent institution in the church, the kingdom. The Lord's words are familiar to all:

26 While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body."

Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. 28 This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. 29 I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

Retrospectively, a clear image of this statement emerges in the early church, the kingdom. First, the very new converts continued in the doctrine of breaking bread in Acts 2 when Peter

used the keys of the kingdom for the first time. Acts 2:42-43 recounts: "42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer." This is the supper of the Lord, in which he eats and drinks again in his kingdom; for Paul writes in 1 Cor 10:16-17:

16 Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? 17 Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

No one can dispute that Paul is talking about the Lord's Supper for in 1 Cor 10:21, he specifically calls it the Lord's table: "21 You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons."

The Lord said that he would drink it anew with the disciples, and now Paul speaks of a participation in the body and blood of Christ at the Lord's Table. Since this is the case, the kingdom, in which he said he would do this, is in existence.

When the disciples met it was on the first day of the week, and they broke bread as Jesus had foretold. Acts 20:7 teaches: "7 On the first day of the week we came together to break bread. Paul spoke to the people and, because he intended to leave the next day, kept on talking until midnight." The very purpose of coming together was to participate with the Lord by breaking bread at the Lord's Table. The Lord must be present in his kingdom at his time where he said he would drink the fruit of the vine anew.

Paul placed the Lord's Supper in the church, the kingdom, in 1 Cor 11:18-26. In verse 18, he names the meeting place as in the church: "18 In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church. . . ." Paul gives the purpose of their coming together as a church in verse 20: "20 When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat. . . ." Paul tells exactly what they were doing, which is just what the Lord said that he would do with them in his Father's kingdom, item for item and step by step. Matt 26:27-29 agrees with 1 Cor 11:23-26:

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Before Some of Those to Whom Christ Spoke Were to Die

Jesus came teaching his disciples to pray for the kingdom to come. The urgency of that prayer accentuated the eminence of the kingdom. In some versions, the kingdom receives mention with other undiminishing divine characteristics—power and glory. In Matt 6:10-13, Jesus taught the disciples:

10 your kingdom come,
your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us today our daily bread.
12 Forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from the evil one.'

6:13: some late manuscripts insert, "For yours is the **kingdom** and the power and the glory forever. Amen." [Emphasis added]

The Lord gave certainty to the time of the coming of his kingdom in Mark 9:1: "9 And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'" The kingdom would come in the time of his listeners and it would come with power. He repeatedly taught this principle right up to his ascension.

When Power Would Come from upon High

Luke begins his narrative in *Acts of the Apostles* by describing how Jesus, after his resurrection, appeared for forty days speaking about the kingdom of God. Acts 1:3 states: "3 After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God." In Acts 1:6, the apostles inquired about the kingdom: "6 So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" In Acts 1:7-8, He tells the disciples to wait in Jerusalem for the power to come up on them:

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

In Acts 2:1-4, the power came with certain and unmistakable force to those who had heard the Lord foretell that they would be living when the kingdom would come with power:

2 When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. 2 Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.

Peter pinpointed this time on the day of Pentecost as the time of the coming of the kingdom with power. He was certain when he said in Acts 2:16-18, "16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel." Peter then quotes Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-19), describing the day of Pentecost, in Acts 2:17-18:

17 "In the last days, God says,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your young men will see visions,
your old men will dream dreams.
18 Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days,
and they will prophesy.

That Joel is prophesying about the coming of the kingdom is beyond dispute; for in Joel 2:32, Joel says that this day is the day of salvation and the day of deliverance, from Zion and in Jerusalem:

32 And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem

there will be deliverance,
as the Lord has said,
among the survivors
whom the Lord calls.

To quote Joel, it is just *as the Lord has said*. Peter understood that this was the kingdom come, and he preached that it was the kingdom come in Acts 2:30-34:

30 But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his **descendants on his throne**. 31 Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the **resurrection of the Christ**, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. 32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 **Exalted to the right hand of God**, he has received from the Father the **promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear**. [Emphasis added.]

From Acts 2 onward in the New Testament, the scriptures speak of the kingdom as being in existence.

From Acts 2 Onward, the Kingdom Exists

Those apostles and prophets speaking and writing after Acts 2 preached the good news of the kingdom of God. Philip carried this message to the Samaritans in Acts 8:12: '12 But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.'

In this regard, Col 1:12-14 teaches:

. . . giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

This passage teaches that the Father brought us into the kingdom of the son now at the same time that we are redeemed and forgiven. If we are not now in the kingdom, we are not now redeemed and not now forgiven. If we are not in the kingdom now, we are not qualified to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light.

In Heb 12:28-29, we are receiving this kingdom now while we are still worshipping:

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

In this same context, Heb 12:22-23, pulls together all the descriptive terms used to refer to the kingdom:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven.

In Rev 1:5-6, when Jesus freed us from our sins, he made us to be a kingdom and priests:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father — to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

In Col 1:12, the saints are translated into the kingdom of the son. That kingdom is an eternal kingdom, and 1 Cor 15:21-26 tells the sequence of events that follow its establishment:

21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

After Christ overcomes all his enemies—death being the last enemy—he will hand over the kingdom to God. There is no room in this sequence for an earthly kingdom to come sometime in the future. When he comes, he will raise those who belong to him and then comes the end.

Jesus Foretold a Spiritual Kingdom

Those who call for a material, earthly kingdom, fail to understand that Christ was certain in his teaching that his kingdom would be spiritual and not physical. Luke 17:20-21 describes the spiritual nature of his kingdom to the Pharisees:

20 Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you."

John 18:36 states clearly that Christ's kingdom is not of this world: "36 Jesus said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place.'"

The Sure Test of Certainty

This lesson has focused on the prophecies of the New Testament and their fulfillment in Acts 2. The overriding theme comes from Peter's words in 2 Peter 1:19-21:

19 And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

These prophecies, when fulfilled, become the sure test of certainty concerning the coming of the kingdom of the day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. On this day of Pentecost the kingdom of Christ, King of kings and Lord of Lords

Went out from Zion,
Went out from Jerusalem,
Came during the time of the Roman kings,
Came with the apostles speaking in tongues,
Came with power from on High,
Came with the Holy Spirit of God,
Came during the time of those living while Christ was on earth,
Came through Christ the son of David,
Came when God raised Christ to sit on the throne of David at God's right hand.

Any doctrine that teaches the kingdom is yet to come or that Christ failed to sit on David's throne is false, and those who teach that doctrine are false teachers.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. 1 Peter 2:9-10: What are the different names that designate the people of God?
2. Acts 2:47: Who were added to the church? How often did this happen?
3. Matt 3:1-3: What did John preach? Which prophecy does this fulfill? What was near at the time John preached?
4. Matt 4:15-17: What prophecy does this fulfill? What did Jesus preach? What did he say about the kingdom of heaven?
5. Matt 11:9-14: What was happening to the kingdom of heaven during the time of John? What men were advancing the kingdom of heaven? To whom did Jesus compare John?
6. Matt 16:18: What would not overcome the church? Who was going to build the church?
7. Matt 16:19-20: What keys did Christ give Peter? What two words here refer to the same group of people?
8. Matt 26:27-29: When did Jesus say that he would drink the fruit of the vine again?
9. Acts 2:42-43: What were the first disciples doing in their worship? Which one of these had to do with the Lord's Supper?
10. 1 Cor 10:16-17: When we partake of the Lord's Supper, with what are we participating?
11. 1 Cor 10:21: On whose table does one find the cup of the Lord?
12. Acts 20:7: On what day do we take the Lord's Supper? What is the primary reason that we come together?
13. 1 Cor 11:18-26: What are we when we partake of the Lord's Supper? What are the common elements of the Lord's Supper in 1 Cor 11:23-26 and in Matt 26:27-29?
14. Matt 6:10-13: What are we to include in our prayers about the kingdom?
15. Mark 9:1: In whose lifetime would the kingdom come? With what will the kingdom come?
16. Acts 1:3: What did Jesus speak of in the forty days after his resurrection?
17. Acts 1:6: About what did the disciples ask?
18. Acts 1:7: Where did the Lord tell the disciples to go? For what were they to wait?
19. Acts 2:1-4: What came from heaven? With what were they filled? What could they do?
20. Acts 2:16-18: What did Peter say this was?
21. Joel 2:32: Who did Joel say would be saved? From where would deliverance come? Who did Joel say had said all this? Who will call the survivors?
22. Acts 2:30-34: Who did God say would sit on his throne? What was God speaking of? Where is Jesus Christ now? Who poured out what they were seeing and hearing?
23. Acts 8:12: What did Phillip preach? What did they do when they heard it?
24. Col 1:12-14: What inheritance do Christians receive? Into what are Christians brought?
25. Heb 12:28-29: What kind of kingdom are Christians receiving?
26. Heb 12:22-24: What words describe the kingdom here?
27. Rev 1:5-6: What did Christ make us to be?
28. 1 Cor 15:21-26: What will happen when the end comes?
29. Luke 17:20-21: Where is the kingdom of God?
30. John 18:36: Of what is Jesus' kingdom not? From where is Jesus kingdom?

8. Prophecies about Jesus' Coming

The last lesson covered those prophecies, which when fulfilled, become the sure test of certainty concerning the coming of the kingdom on the day of Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ. That lesson concluded that on this day of Pentecost, the kingdom of Christ, King of kings and Lord of Lords

Went out from Zion,
Went out from Jerusalem,
Came during the time of the Roman kings,
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Came with power from on High,
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Came when God raised Christ to sit on the throne of David at God's own right hand.

Any doctrine that teaches the kingdom is yet to come or that Christ failed to sit on David's throne is false, and those who teach that doctrine are false teachers.

This lesson turns to the issue of what did Jesus promise and what did his apostles promise concerning Jesus' coming back.

What Did Jesus Promise about His Coming Back?

A core belief of Christians is that Jesus is coming back to take us to be with him in his father's house. In John 14:1-4, Jesus also said that the disciples know the way:

1 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 **You know the way to the place where I am going.**" [Emphasis added.]

When Thomas doubted in John 14:5, the Lord answered in 14:6: "6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life." The same answer holds for people of the 21st century: Jesus is still coming back, and Jesus is still the way, the truth, and the life.

His Angels Will Be with Him

Matt 25:31-33 teaches that Jesus will come in his glory, illustrating that there will be no need for some fictitious war to establish that glory. When he comes, he will already be on his throne in heavenly glory. The judgment begins immediately for people, who in this figure are the sheep and the goats. Matt 25:31-33 reads:

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

Following immediately upon this passage is Matt 25:34, where the kingdom has been prepared for them since the creation of the world: "34 Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for

you since the creation of the world.” In Matt 25:41, in the same context, the wicked receive just punishment at his coming: “41 Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’” Finally, he sums up the fate of righteous and wicked at his coming in Matt 25:46: “46 Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

He Will Come in the Clouds with Great Power and Glory

In Mark 13:26-27, the Lord said that he would be coming in the clouds:

26 "At that time men will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. 27 And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens.

When the Lord describes how his angels will *gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens*, he adds specificity to two statements by Paul. In 1 Cor 15:51-54, Paul described the scene from man’s point of view:

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

In 1 Thess 4:14-17, Paul described the scene from the circumstances of the living and the dead:

14 We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. 15 According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

In Rev 7:1-10, John described further the four angels and the four winds of the earth:

7 After this I saw four angels standing at the four corners of the earth, holding back the four winds of the earth to prevent any wind from blowing on the land or on the sea or on any tree. 2 Then I saw another angel coming up from the east, having the seal of the living God. He called out in a loud voice to the four angels who had been given power to harm the land and the sea: 3 "Do not harm the land or the sea or the trees until we put a seal on the foreheads of the servants of our God." 4 Then I heard the number of those who were sealed: 144,000 from all the tribes of Israel. . . .

9 After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. 10 And they cried out in a loud voice:

"Salvation belongs to our God,
who sits on the throne,
and to the Lamb."

In Mark 14:61-62, Jesus affirmed what had been his consistent teaching to the high priest:

Again the high priest asked him, "Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?"

62 "I am," said Jesus. "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Indeed, Jesus will be coming on the clouds of heaven, where the faithful will be caught up in the air to be with him forever. There is not a single teaching that indicates a future kingdom on earth or that Christ will ever be on the earth. After all, the earth will be destroyed when he comes.

Terror and Apprehension at His Coming

Terror and apprehension will fall upon the evil ones and the heavenly bodies will shake, according to Luke 21:26-28:

6 Men will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. 27 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

Simultaneously with his coming, the heavenly bodies will shake and terror will strike at the hearts of men. Peter described the scene in detail in 2 Peter 3:10-12:

10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.

However, the kingdom of heaven will remain for it cannot be shaken, according to Heb 12:28-29:

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

What Did the Apostle Promise?

One test of inspiration and the spirit of true prophecy is that all the prophecies agree even though different prophets write them down as the Holy Spirit moves them. Such is the case with Jesus and his apostles. In 1 Thess 4:15, a passage previously cited, Paul credited his prophecy of Jesus' coming and man's resurrection to the Lord's own word.

According to the **Lord's own word**, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. 16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. [Emphasis added.]

Paul retells the great judgment scene described by Christ in Matt 25 in 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people

and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

At his coming, the Lord will destroy the lawless one and his satanic work, according to Paul in 2 Thess 2:8-10:

8 And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will overthrow with the breath of his mouth and destroy by the splendor of his coming. 9 The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, 10 and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing.

John records the Lord telling us to hold on until he comes in order to receive our crown in Rev 3:11-12:

11 I am coming soon. Hold on to what you have, so that no one will take your crown. 12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the name of the city of my God, the new Jerusalem, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name.

John described the New Jerusalem, the Holy City, the bride of Christ of Revelation 3 in Rev 21:2-4:

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

All of God's mystery revealed in the Bible closes with the promise that Jesus is coming and that he will bring his reward with him in Rev 22:12: "12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done." Rev 22:20, the last prophecy closed the book:

20 He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon."

Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.

Where Is Jesus Now?

Where is Jesus now? That prophecy which has become the cornerstone of this series of lessons described what happened to Jesus when he died on the cross. Eph 1:19-23 teaches:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

The Revelation added many details to the circumstances of the Lord Jesus during the period from his death upon the cross until his coming in the clouds. John himself heard directly from Jesus in Rev 1:17-18:

17 When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. 18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

When instructing John what to write to the seven churches of Asia, Jesus described himself, his circumstances, and his victory in unequivocal terms. The use of the present tense verbs show that the Lord has attained this glory, power, and might while Christians and churches continue in this present world. His resurrected life with all power, honor, and authority was a *fiat accompli*.

Jesus Holds Seven Stars and Walks among Seven Golden Lampstands

In Revelation 1 the seven stars were the seven angels of the churches and the seven lampstands were the seven churches of Asia. Rev 2:1-2 describes the Lord's relationship to contemporary churches:

These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.

Jesus Is the First and Last, Who Died and Came to Life Again

That Jesus is the first and last, who died and came to life again, occupied the beginning and ending points of John's prophecies. In John 1:1-2, Christ was in the very beginning: "1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning." At the close of John's writings, the Lord speaks in Rev 22:12-13:

12 "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End.

To the church at Smyrna, Jesus said in Rev 2:8:

These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.

Jesus Has the Sharp and Doubled- Edged Sword

The prophecies cast the victorious savior as the one who bears the doubled-edged sword. His sword—the one of the Holy Spirit of God—is the word of God, according to Paul in Eph 6:17: "17 Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." The spiritual nature of this sword and the way it works on the hearts of men is clear in Heb 4:12:

12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

It is a sword—not a metal one out of a scabbard, but a living and active one out of the mouth of the Savior. Rev 19:15 reads, "15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations."

To the church at Pergamum, Jesus said in Rev 2:12-13:

These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.

Jesus' Eyes Are like Blazing Fire and His Feet Are like Burnished Bronze

Jesus has ascended from his mortal body into a form described metaphorically in Rev 1:14-15: "His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. 15 His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters."

To the church at Thyatira, Jesus said in Rev 2:18:

These are the words of the Son of God, whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze.

Jesus Holds the Seven Spirits of God and the Seven Stars

From the prophecies of the Old Testament to Rev 3:1, *sevenfold* represents fullness; in this case the fullness of the Spirit of God. These lessons have already pointed out the seven-fold Spirit promise that was to come with the Messiah in Isa 11:1-2:

11 A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse;
from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.

2 The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him –
the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding,
the Spirit of counsel and of power,
the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord.

In John 3:34-35, John the Baptist told how Jesus came to hold the Spirit of God in his hand: "For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. 35 The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands."

To the church at Sardis, Jesus said in Rev 3:1:

These are the words of him who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars.

Jesus is Holy and True and Holds the Key of David

The key of David represents the authority of the Christ to open, shut, bind, and loose. This metaphor of the Lord's authority began in the prophecy of Isa 22:22: "22 I will place on his shoulder the key to the house of David; what he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open." Christ passed his authority to the apostles when he established his church, the kingdom, in Matt 16:18-19:

I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be [May read *have been.*] bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be [May read *have been.*] loosed in heaven."

To the church at Philadelphia, Jesus wrote Rev 3:7:

These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open.

Jesus Is the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Ruler of God's Creation

Jesus as the *Amen* is brought over from the Old Testament and named Christ as the one and only one through whom the purposes of God are established. In him, is God's eternal purpose full and complete with nothing lacking. In Eph 1:9-10, Paul explained this unqualified fullness:

9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Jesus, as the ruler of God's creation, is the fullness of God's eternal purpose and the complete revelation of his mystery.

To the church at Laodicea, Jesus said in Rev 3:14-15:

These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation.

The Glory of Jesus at His Coming

Finally, since Jesus fulfills all things, he now reigns before us in all majesty, glory, and honor, waging the battle against all evil and unrighteousness. That battle, as with his kingdom, is within us:

Rev 19:11-16 becomes a fitting conclusion:

11 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written:

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Jesus fulfilled all prophecy; God completed his revelation and revealed his mystery. Rev 22:18-19 teaches that they cannot be altered:

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. John 14:1-4: What is in the Father's house? What would he do when he came back?
2. John 14:5: Jesus is what three things?
3. Matt 25:31-33: Who will be with Jesus? Where will he sit? Who will be before him?
4. Matt 25:34: What will he say to the righteous? What will they receive?
5. Matt 25:41: What will he say to the wicked? What will they receive?
6. Matt 25:46: What are two different eternities?
7. Mark 13:26-27: How will the Son of Man come? Who will be with him? Whom will the angels gather? From where will the elect be gathered?
8. 1 Cor 15:51-54: How quickly will the end come? How will the dead be changed? Over what will there be victory? 1 Thess 4:14-17: Who will come with Jesus? Does this passage say Jesus is going to set foot on the earth again? How long will we be in the air?
9. Rev 7:1-10 Who was at the four corners of the earth? Who had the seal of the living God? What was to happen before the earth would be harmed?
10. Rev 7:9-10: How many were before the throne of God? What were they wearing?
11. Mark 14:61-62: What did the high priest ask Jesus? Where would Jesus be sitting? How would Jesus be coming?

12. Luke 21:26-28: When Jesus comes, what will happen to the heavenly bodies? How will men respond? How will Jesus come?
13. Heb 12:25-27: Who are we not to refuse? What will God do to the earth and the heavens?
14. 2 Peter 3:10-13: How will the day of the Lord come? What will happen to the elements, the heavens, and the earth? What kind of people ought we to be?
15. Heb 12:28-29: What cannot be shaken? How are we to worship God? Why?
16. 1 Thess 4:15-18: Where will we meet the Lord? How long will we be there?
17. 2 Thess 1:6-10: How will God pay those who trouble us? Whom will he punish?
18. 2 Thess 2:8-10: What will happen to the lawless one? In accordance with whose work is the coming of the lawless one?
19. Rev 3:11-13: What is the name of the city of God? What will not be in the city of God?
20. Rev 21:2-4: Who is the bride of Christ? Where is the dwelling of God?
21. Rev 22:12-13: What will be with the Lord when he comes?
22. Rev 22:20: Who is coming?
23. Eph 1:19-23: What is the fullness of him who fills everything in every way?
24. Rev 1:17-18: Who holds the keys to death and Hades?
25. Rev 2:1-2: Who holds the seven stars and walks among the seven golden lampstands?
26. John 1:1-2: Who was in the beginning with God?
27. Rev 2:8-9: Who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again?
28. Rev 2:12-13: Who has the sharp, double-edged sword?
29. Rev 2:18: Whose eyes are like blazing fire and whose feet are like burnished bronze?
30. Rev 3:1: Who holds the seven spirits of God and the seven stars?
31. Rev 3:7: Who is holy and true, who holds the key of David?
32. Rev 3:14-15: Who is the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation?
33. Rev 19:11-16: Describe the Lord in his glory.

9. Prophecies about the Resurrection

Lesson 8 explored the prophecies concerning Christ's coming: he would come with the angels of his power; the earth would tremble; the kingdom of Christ would remain and endure eternally; and the faithful followers – dead and alive – would be caught up to meet him in the air where they would forever be with the Lord. 2 Thess 1:5-10 summarizes the events and outcomes at the coming of the Lord:

. . . as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. 6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

This lesson turns on those prophecies of a resurrection of the dead – an escape, at the coming of Jesus, from the grave that holds us, into an eternal life. This is the victory in Jesus.

The Old Testament Foretold a Redemption from the Grave

Job, who wrote from the patriarchal age, foretold a resurrection that included the redeemer of man. In Job 19:25-27:

25 I know that my Redeemer lives,
and that in the end he will stand upon the earth.
26 And after my skin has been destroyed,
yet in my flesh I will see God;
27 I myself will see him
with my own eyes – I, and not another.
How my heart yearns within me!

Job 33:28 clearly showed a redemption from death:

28 He redeemed my soul from going down to the pit,
and I will live to enjoy the light.'

The Psalmist renewed this prophecy in Ps 49:15, foretelling redemption from the grave:

15 But God will redeem my life from the grave;
he will surely take me to himself.

Hosea was more specific in Hos 13:14, where he saw redemption and victory with the destruction of the death and the grave:

14 "I will ransom them from the power of the grave;
I will redeem them from death.
Where, O death, are your plagues?
Where, O grave, is your destruction?"

According to Paul the power over death and the grave comes with the Lord at the last trumpet. In 1 Cor 15:52-54, he wrote:

For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

The trumpet will sound; the dead will be raised; then death has been swallowed up in victory. All of these fulfill Isa 25:7-8, where death will end forever in a resurrection to eternal freedom from death, tears, and disgrace:

7 On this mountain he will destroy
the shroud that enfolds all peoples,
the sheet that covers all nations;
8 he will swallow up death forever.
The Sovereign Lord will wipe away the tears
from all faces;
he will remove the disgrace of his people
from all the earth.

The Lord has spoken.

In 1 Cor 15: 55-57, Paul finishes his preceding statement by quoting Hosea 13:14, above:

55 "Where, O death, is your victory?
Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus Prophesied the Resurrection of the Dead and the Destruction of Hades

The Resurrection of the Dead

Throughout the gospels, the word *resurrection* only appears 14 times and most of them are in connection with the Sadducees trying to catch Jesus by asking a question about marriage in heaven. He responded in Matt 22:30-32:

30 At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven. 31 But about the resurrection of the dead – have you not read what God said to you, 32 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living."

He once again taught about the resurrection in Luke 14:13-14:

13 But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, 14 and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."

Jesus taught that the resurrection of the righteous and the unrighteous would come at the same time in John 5:28-29:

28 "Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice 29 and come out – those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.

A the death of Christ, the dead were raised miraculously in Matt 27:51-53:

51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

At the resurrection of Lazarus, Jesus seized upon the opportunity to instruct on the resurrection of the dead. John 11:23-26 reads:

23 Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

24 Martha answered, "I know he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

25 Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; 26 and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?"

In this single statement, Jesus explained the resurrection and its place in God's plan for our redemption. Eternal life? Do you believe this?

The subject of Christ's resurrection became the object of discussion and teaching during and after Christ's march to the cross. The following is a summary of many such instances:

Matt 16:21: 21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Matt 17:9: 9 As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus instructed them, "Don't tell anyone what you have seen, until the Son of Man has been raised from the dead."

Matt 17:22-23: 22 When they came together in Galilee, he said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. 23 They will kill him, and on the third day he will be raised to life." And the disciples were filled with grief.

Matt 20:18-19: 18 "We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death 19 and will turn him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!"

Matt 27:51-53: 51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. 52 The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. 53 They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

John 21:14-15: 14 This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead.

15 When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter,

Paul chronicled these appearances of the Lord after his death in 1 Cor 15:3-8:

3 For what I received I passed on to you. . . : that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

The Destruction of Death and Hades

Jesus was explicit in his prophecies of the end of death and Hades (realm of the dead). Indeed, if there were to be a resurrection from the dead, it would necessitate the destruction of death and Hades. Jesus described the Hadean world of the wicked, and the nature of the punishment of the unrighteous in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16:22-24:

22 "The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. 23 In hell [*Hades*], where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. 24 So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'"

The promise of the Lord was that Hades could not and would not overcome his church in Matt 16:18: "18 And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

The theme of the destruction of death and Hades continues in the final revelation of God's mystery revealed to John in the Revelation. That book opens with Christ affirming that he holds the keys of death and Hades in Rev 1:18: "18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades." Death and Hades were to continue on the earth with power during our time, according to Rev 6:8:

8 I looked, and there before me was a pale horse! Its rider was named Death, and Hades was following close behind him. They were given power over a fourth of the earth to kill by sword, famine and plague, and by the wild beasts of the earth.

Paul prophesied in 1 Cor 15:20-26 that Christ would conquer death at his coming:

20 But Christ has indeed been **raised from the dead**, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since **death** came through a man, the **resurrection of the dead** comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 **The last enemy to be destroyed is death.** [Emphasis added.]

In 1 Cor 15:54-57, cited above, Paul told how the resurrection would strip death of its power:

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

55 "Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Rev 20:13-15 sealed the fate of death and Hades in lake of fire:

13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The first death, that spiritual and physical death that came with Adam, ended with the second death, the lake of fire, as quoted above in 1 Cor 15: “22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”

The Apostles Preached and Prophesied the Resurrection of the Dead

From the time that the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles, they preached and prophesied about the resurrection of the dead. Their written prophecies presented the facts of the coming resurrection in stunning detail. Paul devoted all of 1 Cor 15 to the subject; and prophecies, such as those of Peter, were common to the apostles. He preached in Acts 2:32-33:

32 God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. 33 Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear.

Peter immediately repeated the message in Acts 3:15: “15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.”

The Logic of the Resurrection

No case for the resurrection can be made better than the case made by Paul in 1 Cor 15:12-19:

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

The validity of the entire Christian faith depends on our accepting the resurrection. The logic of this passage is a bipolar set of facts and conclusions that inexorably lead to the conclusion: Christ was raised from the dead; and because of his resurrection, we will be raised from the dead.

The Manner and Form of the Resurrection

The resurrected form has a manner different from any earthly things we know. Our resurrected body will replace our mortal bodies with one that is imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual. Paul taught in 1 Cor 15:42-44:

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

Paul proceeds to contrast the spiritual and natural bodies, in effect, giving us two ways to look at this spiritual phenomenon. Our new body will be a spiritual body from heaven. 1 Cor 15:44-47 set the stage for the conclusion in 1 Cor 15:48-49:

48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

All those, who look for a materialistic life on earth at the so-called second coming, should pay special attention to the next verse, 1 Cor 15:50: “50 I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.”

The Suddenness of the Resurrection

Paul uses the metaphor—*in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye*—to describe the suddenness of the resurrection as it occurs simultaneously for the living and the dead. 1 Cor 15:51-52 reads:

51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.

In 1 Thess 4:16-17, Paul added detail that helps one understand the suddenness of the resurrection. Again there is the sudden trumpet call of the Lord and the dead in Christ will be raised and, together with those living, be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord. It is there that we shall ever be with the Lord:

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Nothing can depict the suddenness of the Lord’s coming and our attendant resurrection like the Savior’s own words where lightning is the metaphor in Matt 24:27: “27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.”

The First and Second Resurrection

The Bible is clear that for Christians there are two resurrections. To be a part of the second resurrection, people must be raised in the first resurrection. Rev 20:5-6 states the absolute essential nature of this first resurrection: “This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them . . .” This lesson previously showed that the first death was a death to sin, resulting in the death of the mortal bodies. The second death is explained in Rev 20:14-15: “The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” This second death will be the eternal home of all those lost sinners, according to Rev 21:8:

8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

The first resurrection is essential for all those who wish to avoid the second death—the horrible and eternal death in the fiery lake of burning sulfur—and who want to be raised in the Day of the Lord to live eternally with him. Rom 6:3-4 fully describes a resurrection of those dead in sins and trespasses to live a new life:

3 Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? 4 We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

In Col 3:1-4, Paul makes clear the resurrection from the death of sin, where one dies to sin, is the direct pathway to the second resurrection where one will appear with Christ in glory at his coming:

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

Peter, just as Paul, taught with certainty that the resurrection from the watery grave of baptism is the first resurrection, calling it the new birth in 1 Peter 1:3-4:

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade – kept in heaven for you,

The attainment of this eternal inheritance in heaven—the second resurrection—comes only by submission to the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus in baptism from which one comes out of the water in the first resurrection. 1 Peter 3:21-22 teaches:

21 and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also – not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a good conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who has gone into heaven and is at God's right hand – with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

In conclusion, Rev 20:5-6 stands as a demand for all who want to avoid the second death: “This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them”

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. 2 Thess 1:5-10: What will happen when Jesus is revealed in heaven? What will happen to those who know not God and obey not the gospel?
2. Job 19:25-27: In the end, who will stand on the earth? What will happen to Job's skin?
3. Job 33:28: From what would Job's soul be redeemed?
4. Ps 49:15: From what would the Psalmist's life be redeemed?
5. Hos 13:14: Where are the plagues of death? Where is the destruction of death?
6. 1 Cor 15:52-54: How will the dead be raised? What will be swallowed up in victory?
7. Isa 25:7-8: What will happen to death? What will happen to tears and disgrace?
8. 1 Cor 15: 55-57: What is the sting of death? Through whom is victory?
9. Matt 22:30-32: What will Christians be like in heaven? Of whom is God the God?
10. Luke 14:13-14: When will you be repaid for good deeds?
11. Matt 27:51-53: When were many holy people raised to life?
12. John 11:23-26: Who will live even though they die? Who is the resurrection and the life?
13. Matt 16:21: When would Jesus be raised to life? Who would kill Jesus?
14. Matt 17:9: What were the disciples not to tell anyone?
15. Matt 17:22-23: What filled the disciples with grief?
16. Matt 20:18-19: What would happen to Jesus in Jerusalem? When would he be raised to life?
17. John 21:14-15: How many times had Jesus appeared to his disciples?
18. 1 Cor 15:3-8: List the specific appearances of Jesus?
19. Luke 16:22-24: After he was buried, what was it like for the rich man? Where was Lazarus?
20. Matt 16:18-19: What cannot overcome the Lord's church?
21. Rev 1:18: What keys did Christ hold?
22. Rev 6:8: What power do Death and Hades have?

23. 1 Cor 15:20-26: When Christ comes, what is the last enemy destroyed?
24. 1 Cor 54-57: In whom do we have victory? Whom are we to thank?
25. Rev 20:13-15: What will happen to death and Hades? To those not in the book of life?
26. 1 Cor 15: In whom do all men die? In whom do all men live?
27. Acts 2:32-34: What happened to Jesus? Who are the witnesses of this fact?
28. Acts 3:15: Who is the author of life?
29. 1 Cor 15:12-19: Can you repeat Paul's logic proof that there is a resurrection of the dead?
30. 1 Cor 15:42-44: What will the resurrected body be like?
31. 1 Cor 15:48-49: What likeness shall we bear after the resurrection?
32. 1 Cor 15:50: What cannot inherit the kingdom of God? What else can they not inherit?
33. 1 Cor 15:51-52: How quickly will the resurrection come?
34. 1 Thess 4:16-18: How sudden will be the resurrection? What sounds will we hear?
35. Rev 20:14-15: How many resurrections are there? How many deaths are there?
36. Rev 21:8: What is the second death?
37. Rom 6:3-7: From what are we raised in the first resurrection? To what are we raised?
38. Col 3:1-4: How does one get to the final resurrection? Where are we to set our minds?
39. 1 Peter 1:3-5: What do we have through the resurrection of Jesus Christ?
40. 1 Peter 3:21-22: What saves us? By what does it save us?
41. Rev 20:5-6: Over whom does the second death have no power?

10. Prophecies of the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Coming of the Lord—Matt 24

Matt 24 is the source of many false teachings and misinterpretations, resulting in many prominent false doctrines of the 21st century. The false teachings focus mostly on the various millennium theories, such as premillennialism, postmillennialism, and transmillennialism. What these teachings have in common is their rejection of the scriptures that teach that Christ was raised from the dead to sit at the right hand of God, as king of the kingdom of God. One such passage—referred to many times in these studies—is Eph 1:19-23:

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

They also have views of a second coming completely contradictory to such passages as 2 Thess 1:6-10:

6 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed.

Some teach that Christ will come and reign 1,000 years before the judgment. Others teach that Christ returned at the destruction of Jerusalem when, in their false teaching, all the New Testament prophecies were fulfilled, including the prophecies of judgment and eternal punishment. This lesson will not attempt to respond to the host of arguments made by these false teachers, except in the context of the specific verses, which they misuse. We defer in this matter to the apostle Peter, who said in 2 Peter 2:1-3:

2 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them—bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up.

Paul told Timothy to refuse these false teachers in 2 Tim 2:22-23:

22 Flee the evil desires of youth, and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, along with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 Don't have anything to do with foolish and stupid arguments, because you know they produce quarrels.

When people speculate about the coming without using scriptural authority, there is no way to answer their myriad of *what ifs* and human conjectures. This lesson focuses on what the scriptures say.

Background and Introduction

The episodes, where Jesus condemned the false teachers in Jerusalem, had just concluded with Jesus announcing his return in Matt 23:38-39: “38 Look, your house is left to you desolate. 39

For I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

As they left the temple, Jesus called attention to the impending destruction of the temple in Matt 24:1-2:

1 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. 2 "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

Afterward the apostles raised two questions: When will this happen? What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age? Matt 24:3 reads:

3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

In the context, the first question—*when will this happen?*—refers to *the abomination that causes desolation* (verse 15); that is, the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem (verses 1-2). The second question—*what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?*—refers to Christ's return at the very end cited above in 2 Thess 1:6-10. Readers must be careful not to confuse these questions and answers— either willfully or unwillingly.

Then the End Will Come—Matt 24:4-14

Jesus begins by focusing on the manner of his coming, listing the many historical events that must take place before he does come. He alerts the apostles to the false announcements that will come:

Matt 24:4-8 reads:

4 Jesus answered: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. 6 You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. 8 All these are the beginning of birth pains.

The Lord's statement is a summary of the history of man during the last days, and he begins by warning, "Watch out that no one deceives you?" Almost every war and difficulty of man finds those who seize upon the occasion to forecast that the Lord is coming. Recent examples are the Gulf War and the Iraq War. Nothing by man or nature signals the Lord is coming. The Lord here uses the words *the end*, and in verse three, he used the words *the end of the age*. These are not ambiguous and uncertain terms about which men may speculate as to the meaning. The Lord and the apostles used these terms to identify and exactly state when the end would come.

In Matt 10:22, *the end* indicates the time when those who stand firm will be saved: "22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved." In Matt 13:38-39, *the end of the age* tells when the harvesting of the sons of the evil one comes: "The weeds are the sons of the evil one, 39 and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels." In this same context in Matt 13:40-42, the end of the age identifies the time when the Son of Man and his angels destroy all evil, end in punishment:

40 "As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at **the end of the age**. 41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom

everything that causes sin and all who do evil. 42 They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [Emphasis added.]

Finally, in Matt 13:49-50, the separation comes of the righteous and the wicked:

49 This is how it will be at **the end of the age**. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. [Emphasis added.]

When the apostles asked in Matt 24:3, "And what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" the focus had to be at the coming of the Lord and the final judgment.

Paul clearly proclaimed *the end* at just this very time of the coming of the Lord in 1 Cor 15:24-26:

24 Then **the end** will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. [Emphasis added.]

Matt 24:9-14 added further detail:

9 "Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. 10 At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, 11 and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. 12 Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, 13 but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. 14 And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then **the end** will come. [Emphasis added.]

This passage is an accurate description, in prophecy, what we now see, in fulfillment, as 2,000 years of history. After persecution, after many turn away, after many false prophets, the faithful will be saved in *the end*. After the gospel of this kingdom is preached to the whole world, then *the end* will come. Peter also pinpoints this *end of time* as at the coming of the Lord and the destruction of the world. His words are graphic and specific in 2 Peter 3:7-10:

7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for **the day** of judgment and destruction of ungodly men.

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.

10 But **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. [Emphasis added.]

The Destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem—"the Abomination that Causes Desolation"

Beginning in verse 15, Jesus moves to answer the apostles' other question. Jesus prompted that question as they were leaving the temple grounds in Matt 24:1-2:

1 Jesus left the temple and was walking away when his disciples came up to him to call his attention to its buildings. 2 "Do you see all these things?" he asked. "I tell you the truth, not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."

They implored, "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen?" To which Jesus gave the answer in the passage beginning in Matt 24:15-22:

15 "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel – let the reader understand – 16 then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. 17 Let no one on the roof of his house go down to take anything out of the house. 18 Let no one in the field go back to get his cloak. 19 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! 20 Pray that your flight will not take place in winter or on the Sabbath. 21 For then there will be great distress, unequalled from the beginning of the world until now – and never to be equaled again. 22 If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.

What these verses are about is explicit in this passage—"the abomination that causes desolation"—is the destruction of the temple, the end of the daily sacrifice, and the destruction of Jerusalem. It is what was spoken of by Daniel the prophet.

The age, marked by the fulfillment of the prophecy to destroy the temple and concluded with the victory over death, will be marked with great deceit. Predictions of the appearance of Christ would be accompanied by signs and miracles, and indeed these have run rampant across the centuries, just as Christ forecast in Matt 24:23-25:

23 At that time if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'There he is!' do not believe it. 24 For false Christs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and miracles to deceive even the elect – if that were possible. 25 See, I have told you ahead of time.

Daniel clearly prophesied a desolation and desecration of the temple of such magnitude that the daily sacrifice would end. In Dan 11:31-32, armed forces would do this:

31 "His armed forces will rise up to desecrate the temple fortress and will abolish the daily sacrifice. Then they will set up the abomination that causes desolation. 32 With flattery he will corrupt those who have violated the covenant, but the people who know their God will firmly resist him.

Of course, by the time Christ was speaking, the abomination was imminent; and c 40 years later, the armies of Caesar would lay siege on Jerusalem and destroy the city and the temple. In Daniel's prophesy, the end is not the end of his life, nor is it the destruction of Jerusalem, but it is the resurrection. Dan 12:13 reads: "13 As for you, go your way **till the end**. You will rest, and then at the **end of the days** you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance." [Emphasis added.]

The destruction of Jerusalem was God's final judgment against a city, similar in its completeness to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Roman legions lay siege in 70 AD; and on the 15th day of the siege, Agrippa's wall fell; on the 72nd day the fortress tower, Antonia, near the temple, fell; and 12 days later (84th day) the daily sacrifice ceased. On the 105th, day the temple was burned; and on the last day (134th day), the whole city was in flames.

In 132 AD-135 AD, the last Jewish rebellion occurred, after which the very site of the temple was plowed up. An altar to Jupiter sat on the temple site, and Jews were excluded from the city on pain of death. [Notes for the preceding two paragraphs come from JERUSALEM: the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Electronic Data Base, © 1996, 2003, and 2006 by Biblesoft, Inc.]

The Last Days

From the time of Christ on earth until the end is called the last days in the New Testament. The apostles describe these days in the same way that Christ did in Matt 24:9-14 above, For example, Peter quoted the prophet Joel in Acts 2:16-17:

16 No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel:

17 "**In the last days**, God says,

I will pour out my Spirit on all people. [Emphasis added.]

Paul added specific details that were often the same as Christ's details of the last days. Writing in Tim 3:1-5, he said:

3 But mark this: There will be terrible times **in the last days**. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, 3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, 4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God— 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them. [Emphasis added.]

The Hebrew writer separated the era from which God spoke through the prophets from the one in the last days from which he spoke through his son in Heb 1:1-2:

1 In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, 2 but **in these last days** he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. [Emphasis added.]

Of course, if they were the last days, there could be no others. The doing of evil deeds and the punishment attendant to evil deeds comes in the last days, according to James 5:3-5:

3 Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the **last days**. 4 Look! The wages you failed to pay the workmen who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. [Emphasis added.]

Peter places the end of the last days at the time of the destruction of the heavens and earth by fire in 2 Peter 3:3,7; 10-13

3 First of all, you must understand that in the **last days** scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. . . . 7 By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the **day of judgment** and destruction of ungodly men.

. . . 10 But **the day of the Lord** will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to **the day of God** and speed its coming. **That day** will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. [Emphasis added.]

Distinguishing between the Abomination that Causes Desolation and the Last Days

Christ was very clear that no matter how terrible was the destruction of Jerusalem, it was not his coming at the end of days or the end of the last days. In Matt 24:26-28, the Lord said that we are not only to not pay attention to those who predict the end and his coming; but when he does come, it will be obvious to all:

26 "So if anyone tells you, 'There he is, out in the desert,' do not go out; or, 'Here he is, in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. 27 For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 28 Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

In the following verses, he does specify in detail the nature and appearance of his coming. In Matt 24:29, he quotes the prophecy of Isaiah to tell us how it will be:

29 "Immediately after the distress of those days
"the sun will be darkened,
and the moon will not give its light;
the stars will fall from the sky,
and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.'

Isaiah uses this language twice—once in Isa 13:10-11 and again in Isa 34:4—and in both instances, he speaks of the end of the world and universe and the end of days (time).

The Lord's use of the word *immediately—forthwith*, as Vine suggests, might be more accurate—which shows that the next major event will be his return and all that it entails. Strong offers *directly*. The point is that there is no reason to expect anything other than the return of the Lord, neither in the lives of his listeners, nor in our lives today. The Lord says as much in certain words in Matt 23:30-31, beginning with *at that time*:

30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. 31 And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

From all the prophets, these lessons have presented the characteristics and manifestations of the Lord's coming: he will come in the clouds, the angels of his power will be with him, there will be the loud trumpet call, the dead in Christ will rise, and we who are living will join them and be together with the Lord forever. These are the only events, summarized by the Lord, as those that follow *the abomination that leads to desolation*.

The Imminent and Sudden Coming of the Lord

The imminent and sudden coming of the lord demands all people for all time be prepared. In this regard, everyone who ever lives stands before the end in exactly the same way and in a sense, in exactly the same time. In the Dan 12:13, quoted above, God told Daniel of the two eternal events in the lives of all people: the end of life and the end of days. This places everyone at exactly the place concerning the event of his coming—the end is imminent and will come suddenly whether by death or by the coming of the Lord.

To describe this sudden and imminent nature of the certainty of death and his coming, the Lord, asserts the eternal principle and follows it with illustrations. In Matt 24:36, the eternal principle states the nature of the coming of the Lord: "36 "No one knows about that day or

hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” Any prophecy, which would purport to set a specific time or place for the Lord to return, is false.

The first example illustrates the coming of the Lord with the example of Noah in Matt 24:37-39:

37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; 39 and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

“That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man” leaves no room for any other interpretation. The coming of the Lord is always imminent and it surely will be sudden in its coming. The Lord will gather his righteous to eternal life. John 4:35-36 describes this harvest:

I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest. 36 Even now the reaper draws his wages, even now he harvests the crop for eternal life, so that the sower and the reaper may be glad together.

God’s reveals the details of His mystery of the harvest in Rev 14:14-16:

14 I looked, and there before me was a white cloud, and seated on the cloud was one "like a son of man" with a crown of gold on his head and a sharp sickle in his hand. 15 Then another angel came out of the temple and called in a loud voice to him who was sitting on the cloud, "Take your sickle and reap, because the time to reap has come, for the harvest of the earth is ripe." 16 So he who was seated on the cloud swung his sickle over the earth, and the earth was harvested.

The harvest and the resurrection are events for the righteous and so they will be the ones taken by the Lord as reported in Matt 24:40-41: “40 Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. 41 Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left.” Prophecy gives the order of events for those taken in 1 Thess 4:16-17:

16 For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. 17 After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air.

For those left, hell is just as imminent and sudden. Matt 24:50-51 describes this fate:

50 The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he is not aware of. 51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The Lord states the lesson of this prophecy in Matt 24:42, 44—a fitting scripture to conclude his discussion of his coming:

42 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.
44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Eph 1:19-23: Where is Christ now? What is the church to Christ?
2. 2 Thess 1:6-10: What will happen to those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus?

3. 2 Peter 2:1-3: What will false teachers do?
4. 2 Tim 2:22-23: How are we to respond to them?
5. Matt 23:38-39: When will we see the Lord again?
6. Matt 24:1-2:1: What did Jesus say would happen to the temple buildings?
7. Matt 24:3: What two questions did the disciples ask?
8. Matt 24:4-8: What will happen before Jesus will come?
9. Matt 10:22: When will we be saved?
10. Matt 13:38-39: Who is the devil? When will the harvest be?
11. Matt 13:40-42: What will happen at the end of the age?
12. Matt 13:49-50: How will it be at the end of the age?
13. 1 Cor 15:24-26: When the end comes, what will happen to the kingdom? What is the last enemy to be destroyed?
14. Matt 24:9-14:9: What will happen from the time of Chris until now?
15. 2 Peter 3:7-10: For what is the heavens and earth reserved? For what are they kept?
16. Matt 24:1-2: How did Jesus answer his disciples?
17. Matt 24:15-22: When was the abomination that causes desolation fulfilled?
18. Matt 24:23-25: Who will people say has appeared?
19. Dan 11:31-32:31: What will armed forces do? What is this called?
20. Acts 2:16-17: To what did Joel have reference? When would this be?
21. Tim 3:1-5: 3: What will the last days be like?
22. Heb 1:1-2: In what days has God spoken? In whom does he speak?
23. James 5:3-5: Who will cry out in the last days?
24. 2 Peter 3:3,7; 10-13: For what are the heavens and earth reserved? How will the day of the Lord come? Can you describe that day?
25. Matt24:29: What did Job say would happen?
26. Matt 23:30-31:30 What will we see and hear at the coming of the Lord?
27. In Matt 24:36: Who knows when the end will come?"
28. Matt 24:37-39: How will the Lords coing be like the days of Noah?
29. John 4:35-36: For what are the crops harvested?
30. Rev 14:14-16: Who swings the sickle to harvest the earth?
31. Matt 24:40-41: Who will be taken?
32. 1 Thess 4:16-17: What will the Lord's coming be like?
33. Matt 24:50-51: 50: What will happen to those who are not ready when the master comes?
34. Matt 24:42, 44:42: Why must we keep watch?

11. The Thousand-Year Reign of Christ on Earth is False: Revelation 20

The thousand-year reign of Christ on earth, over an earthly kingdom, is false teaching. The idea taken from Revelation 20 is the centerpiece and foundation of all millennial theories. Without the thousand-year reign on earth, all these theories fail, along with the sectarian theology they have created. The Bible uses the phrase—*thousand years*—ten times. Revelation 20 uses it five of these ten; and the other five times refer to the indefinite way God considers time. The first example of how God considers time in Ps 90:4-6, where the psalmist said:

4 For a thousand years in your sight
are like a day that has just gone by,
or like a watch in the night.
5 You sweep men away in the sleep of death;
they are like the new grass of the morning —
6 though in the morning it springs up new,
by evening it is dry and withered.

The use of *like* and the disparate meanings of *day* and *year* leave no doubt as to the metaphoric nature of the phrase—time with God is indefinite. Peter makes the metaphor certain in 2 Peter 3:8-9 by a double use in the same sentence, eliminating any room for misunderstanding:

8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. 9 The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness.

If there were no contextual indications of this indefinite meaning of *a thousand years* (of which there are many), the metaphor is amply defined in all of its other Biblical uses. To suddenly place another meaning upon it, ignoring the Biblical use, is overt perversion.

Revelation 20 Begins with Symbolic Language

Revelation 20:1-3 begins the chapter with a symbolic statement that includes a *thousand years*:

1 And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. 2 He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. 3 He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time.

A Figurative Chain Binds the Devil

That a literal chain bound the devil runs counter to all the rest of what the Bible teaches about his nature—the *chain* is symbolic as the *thousand years* is symbolic. Unless one sticks closely to the scriptures, symbolic language is easy to distort. However, there is no disputing the symbolic meaning of *dragon*; for the scripture itself explains it by the marshaling of all the metaphors used for the devil: *dragon, serpent, devil, and Satan*. To take one part of the passage as symbolic—devil, with all his meanings and chain--and arbitrarily to take another part literal—a thousand years—violates all principles of correctly handling the word of truth. 2 Tim 2:15 teaches:

15 Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.

The error that millennial folk make is two-fold. They fail to comprehend and apply what the scriptures say about a *thousand years*. They pervert the present passage by switching from literal to figurative meanings as suit their purposes.

The rest of the New Testament tells exactly how Christ bound the devil and for how long. The purpose of the sealing and locking up of the devil was “to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore.” Christ accomplished all this when he came to earth, left his word and the Holy Spirit, and conquered death.

Christ’s Power over the Devil

From the beginning of his earthly ministry, Christ showed power over the devil—a power that eventually led to his victory over death and his sending of the Holy Spirit to aid the disciples. During his temptation by the devil, Jesus rebuked him with a command, showing that the dragon’s power was on the wane, “10 Jesus said to him, ‘Away from me, Satan! For it is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.’ 11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.” Matthew 4:10-11. Later, while speaking to Peter in Mark 8:33, Jesus commanded, “Get behind me, Satan !. . .You do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”

Not only was Jesus able to command and rebuke the devil, but he established power over the kingdom of the devil—evil lusts, sin, and demons. He extended his power to his disciples in Luke 10:18-20:

18 He replied, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

How the Devil Is Bound

The devil continued to be bound after Christ ascended. The church, his kingdom, received protection during this long, but indefinite time, called here, a thousand years. John has written in his gospel in John 14:16-18:

“16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.”

The chain that binds the devil is the word of God, written by the apostles and prophets and testified to by the saints. In Revelation 19:10, the angel told John: “I am a fellow servant with you and with your brothers who hold to the testimony of Jesus. Worship God! For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” It is the testimony of Jesus, the spirit of prophecy, that keeps the dragon from deceiving the nations anymore. The truth is there for all to know. Not even the gates of Hades shall overcome the Lord’s church (Matthew 16:16-19).

The Reigning with Christ and First Resurrection Define the Thousand Years

The parameters of the thousand years began when Christians began to reign with Christ and ends when the first resurrection gives way to the second death and the second resurrection. Rev 20:4-6 reads:

4 I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image

and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ **a thousand years**. 5(The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. 6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for **a thousand years**. [Emphasis added.]

The Kingdom of Christ in Existence

At the same time as the binding of the dragon by the power of a resurrected Christ, the kingdom of Christ came into existence. These two events—the binding of the devil and the beginning of the kingdom of Christ—mark the beginning of the metaphoric thousand years. It is during this time that those given authority to judge sit upon the thrones. Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:2-3: “2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!” Jesus, while yet living in this world, promised his disciples in Matthew 19:28, “28 Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things, when the Son of Man sits on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.’”

John next saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. John had met these souls at the opening of the seals in Revelation 6:9-11:

9 When he opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

The First Death and First Resurrection

The time of their vindication is near. All Christians die for the word of God. All Christians experience this death when they die to sin. Paul describes, in detail, the death of Christians to sin and the resurrection to a new life, called here *the first resurrection*. In Romans 6:5-11, Paul explains the first resurrection:

5 If we have been united with him like this in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection. 6 For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin— 7 because anyone who has died has been freed from sin.

8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 For we know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he cannot die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 The death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God.

11 In the same way, count yourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

For souls to obey Christ and rise with him to walk in newness of life is the new birth spoken of by Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3:3-7:

3 In reply Jesus declared, "I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again."

4 "How can a man be born when he is old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!"

5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.'"

That they should not worship the beast nor receive the mark of the beast is critical to those raised with Christ. These Christians will come to life—the first resurrection where they are raised from baptism to walk in newness of life. These same Christians will reign with Christ for the thousand years. The beginning of the thousand years started when these Christians began to enter the kingdom. Jesus said, while on earth, in Mark 9:1: "1 And he said to them, 'I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power.'" Paul showed that Christians were brought into the kingdom in Colossians 1:12-14, "12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

When Christ's Kingdom Began on Earth and in Heaven

Christ's kingdom has been on the earth from the time God first brought saints into it on the day of Pentecost after Christ's death. The thousand years and this kingdom on earth, the church, began at the same time. John has witnessed this principle repeatedly in the revelation. Two examples will suffice: Revelation 1:5-6 states, "5 and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father." The combination of the perfect tense verb, *has made*, (an action begun in the past and continued to the present) and the present tense infinitive, *to be* (a permanent state of being), show us in a kingdom from that first day, continuing forever. The praise of the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders affirmed this very principle in Revelation 5:9-10:

You were slain,

and with your blood you purchased men for God

from every tribe and language and people and nation.

10 You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God,

and they will reign on the earth.

How long this kingdom, now upon the earth, the church, will continue marks the end of the thousand years. Jesus taught that the exact day no one knows in Matthew 24:36-37, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. 37 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man." In 2 Peter 3:8-10, Peter taught the same thing: "8 But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. . . . 10 But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare." Although Paul does

not give a specific day for the end to come, he does give an unmistakable sequence of happenings, including the end. In 1 Corinthians 15:22-24, Paul wrote:

22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

When the Thousand Years Ends

Therefore, the thousand years is continuing, the Dragon is bound by the spirit of prophecy and the testimony of Jesus, and the Holy Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, joint-heirs with Jesus (See Romans 8:8-16-17).

The first resurrection is the resurrection from baptism into the death of Jesus that we might walk in newness of life. We are born anew, according to John's gospel and are of the first resurrection in Rev 20:6-7:

6 Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a **thousand years**.

Just as the kingdom and the thousand years began with those first Christians and continues to our time, so does the priesthood, which is composed of these same Christians. Peter wrote of Christians in 1 Peter 2:9-10:

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

The Second Death and the Second Resurrection

The second death has no power over Christians who have washed away their sins and been raised to walk in newness of life (the first resurrection). Paul described the first death as a spiritual death in Ephesians 2:1-5:

2:1 As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, 2 in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. 3 All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. 4 But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, 5 made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions – it is by grace you have been saved.

To this first and spiritual death, Paul added the first resurrection in Colossians 3:1-4:

1 Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. 3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

The Revelation clearly explains the second death. In Revelation 2:11, Christians learn how to escape it, "11 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes will not be hurt at all by the second death." According to Revelation 20:14-15, the lake of fire is the second death; and in Revelation 21:8, it called the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

The Devil's Doom Defines the End of the Thousand Years

At the end of the thousand years is the time when Jesus will deliver the kingdom to the father. It will occur when Jesus has overcome all his adversaries. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 records these events: "24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

Also the devil will be released to receive his just reward as described in Rev 20:7-10:

7 When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison 8 and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. 9 They marched across the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Gog, the king, and Magog, the kingdom, from a prophecy of Ezekiel represent the spiritual battle between the dragon and the church. *The camp of God's people, the city he loves* is the heavenly city, the New Jerusalem, the church. Nelson describes that ancient event:

The leader of a confederacy of armies that attacked the land of Israel. Described as "the prince of Rosh, Meshech, and Tubal," Gog is also depicted as being "of the land of Magog" (Ezekiel 38:2-3), a "place out of the far north" of Israel. Ezekiel prophetically describes Gog and his allies striking at Israel with a fierce and sudden invasion (Ezekiel 38-39). According to Ezekiel's prophecy, Gog will be crushed on the mountains of Israel in a slaughter so great it will take seven months to bury the dead (Ezekiel 39:12). (from Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary, Copyright © 1986, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

There is little, if any, evidence that Ezekiel's prophecy historically happened, indicating that the Israel of that prophecy was the spiritual Israel, the church, and the battle was a spiritual battle against those who wear white garments and hold to the testimony of Jesus. Therefore, this passage in Revelation 20 has the same meaning as the battle of Armageddon in Revelation 16:16, the final battle with the beast and the false prophet in Revelation 19:19-20. They, too, were thrown in the fiery lake:

19 Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to make war against the rider on the horse and his army. 20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

Satan will go first to his doom and Death and Hades will quickly follow in verses 20:14-15. Not all of Satan's resources, gathered from all over the world, could overcome the church, the camp of God's people, the city that he loves. Fire devoured the followers of Satan, and Satan, the devil, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, just like the beast and the false prophet before him. The end of Satan comes in just three verses or 113 words.

Neither Revelation 20 nor Any of the Scriptures Mention a Reign of Christ on the Earth

Neither Revelation 20 nor any of the scriptures mention a reign of Christ on the earth at any time or any place; it is simply not found in the Bible. The scripture nowhere says that Christ will reign a thousand years. False teachers of the millennial theories base their false doctrine on Rev 20:6: "They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The antecedent of the subject *they* is *souls* Rev 20:4: "the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God." These beheaded souls are the ones who reign for a thousand years, not Christ who reigns forever and forever. Rev 11:15 teaches:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom
of our Lord and of his Christ,
and he will reign for ever and ever."

Jesus, himself, taught that his kingdom was immediate, and not something of a distant future. In Mark 9:1, the Lord taught: "9 And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God come with power." He also taught that it was a spiritual kingdom not of this world in John 18:36: "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

All those who have been, all those who are now, or all those who will be Christians, are in his kingdom. In Col 1:12-13, Christian are brought into the kingdom:

12 giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the kingdom of light. 13 For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves.

It is into this existing kingdom that we are called, according to Paul in 1 Thess 2:11-12:

For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, 12 encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.

The Christians to whom Hebrews was written were presently receiving the kingdom in Heb 12:28-29:

28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, 29 for our "God is a consuming fire."

Finally, according to Rev 1:5-6, Christ freed us from sins and made us to be a kingdom:

To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, 6 and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father – to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen.

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. Ps 90:4-6: How does God compare days and years? When do days and years cease?
2. 2 Peter 3:8-9: How long is a day to the Lords? How long is a year to the Lord?
3. Revelation 1:1-3: How many figures of speech are there in this passage? Who is the devil? What happens to him? How long? Why is the devil bound?
4. 2 Tim 2:15-16: How are we to handle the truth?
5. Matt 4:10-11: What did Jesus tell the devil?

6. Mark 8:33: Who did Jesus rebuke?
7. Luke 10:18-20: What happened to the devil? What authority did Christ give the apostles?
8. John 14:16-19: Who did the Lord give the apostles? For how long ?
9. Revelation 19:10: What do the brothers hold? What is the spirit of prophecy?
10. Matthew 16:16-19: What will not prevail against the church?
11. Rev 20:4-6: Who has the authority to judge? Why had the souls lost their heads? Who came to life and reigned? What is the first resurrection? Over whom does the second death have no power? Who will be priests of God and of Christ?
12. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3: Who will judge the world? Who will judge the angels?
13. Matthew 19:28: Who will sit on the twelve thrones? When will they sit there?
14. Revelation 6:9-11: Why had the souls been slain? What were they given?
15. Romans 6:5-11: How do Christians die? How are they united with Christ in the resurrection? To what did Christ die? What is done away in baptism? 16. John 3:3-7: What must you do to see the kingdom of God?
17. Mark 9:1: How do we know the kingdom has already come?
18. Colossians 1:12-14: Into what were Christians brought? What is our inheritance?
19. Revelation 1:5-6: Who is the ruler of the kings of the earth? What has he made us to be?
20. Revelation 5:9-10: Since we are made to be a kingdom, where do we reign?
21. Matthew 24:36-37: When will the coming of the Lord be?
22. 2 Peter 3:8-10: What is a day like to the Lord? What is a year like to the Lord?
23. 1 Corinthians 15:22-24: When will the end come? What will happen to the kingdom?
24. Romans 8:8-16-17: Who will be joint heirs with Christ?
25. Rev 20:6-7: Over whom does the second death have no power?
26. 1 Peter 2:9-10: What does Peter say we are?
27. Ephesians 2:1-5: What is the present world like?
28. Revelation 2:11: Who will not be hurt by the second death?
29. Revelation 20:14-15; 21:8: What is the second death?
30. 1 Corinthians 15:24-26: Who is the last enemy destroyed?
31. Rev 20:7-10: What will happen to the devil?
32. Revelation 19:19-20: What will happen to the beast and the false prophet?
33. Rev 11:15: What has the kingdom of the world become? How long will Christ reign?
34. John 18:36: How do you know Christ's kingdom is not of this world?
35. 1 Thess 2:11-12: Into what does God call us?
36. Heb 12:28-29: 28: What kind of kingdom are we receiving?

12. God Accomplished His Mystery Completely in Christ

That God has completely accomplished his will is an overarching principle of the New Testament. Yet, the religious world continually seeks to change that principle by adding its own modification through various methods of bogus alterations: some claim apostolic powers. For example, the Catholics' Pope may bind and loose, changing the scriptures by speaking *ex-cathedra*. Mormons have their Book of Mormon with its latter day revelation and modern day apostles who claim power to bind and loose the scriptures. All those believing latter day revelation fit in this category. Seventh Day Adventist, Jehovah Witnesses, and Christian Scientists, etc.,—all of these and others hold this view. Other religious groups—including most protestant denominations—take to themselves the power to alter and interpret the scriptures in councils, synods, and conventions.

All of these ignore the fundamental principles of the New Testament forbidding the alteration of the scriptures in any shape or manner. The chief passage of this study of prophecy denies to all the right of private interpretation of the scriptures, usurping the power of God almighty. 2 Peter 1:20-21 denies this presumed right of private interpretation of the scriptures:

20 Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. 21 For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Likewise, Paul condemns perverting the gospel of Christ in Gal 1:8: "8 But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned!"

The Revelation warns against adding to or taking away from prophecy in Rev 22:18-19:

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

With God accomplishing his mystery completely in Christ, all other views must be false.

The Mystery of God Accomplished

The Revelation lays out the history of God's mystery revealed in Christ. Since so much of the scriptures describe this history of man's fall and redemption through Christ, it is extremely difficult to see how the perverters can even think of a different intent. *The Revelation* declares that God will accomplish his mystery in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet in Rev 10:7:

7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

Two things are important here: First, the revelation of God's mystery is not a single event (*in the days*) but it occurs over a period of days. The phrase, *in the days*, rules out all views of some future and sudden event, such as the end of the world or a mythical war of Armageddon. It is, as shall be demonstrated, the redemption story—inclusive of the Christ, coming to earth and overcoming sin and death by his death upon the cross, and the effect that his coming has had on those who subsequently live on the earth. Second, he announced the mystery through the prophets; therefore, any idea or interpretation inconsistent with prophecies of the Old and New Testament, is false and those who pronounce them are false teachers. Thus, all latter day prophecies are false; and all interpretations by the various

councils, conventions, and synods are false. God's mystery is only in *the word of the prophets made more certain* (2 Peter 1:19) by the resurrected saviour, ascended to the right hand of God, the Father.

When Did God Accomplish His Mystery?

The prophets of the Old and New Testaments spoke clearly; God has accomplished his mystery completely in Christ. In fact, Paul teaches that God purposed the mystery in Christ in Eph 1:9-10:

9 And he **made known** to us the **mystery of his will** according to his good pleasure, which he **purposed in Christ**, 10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment – to bring **all things** in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. [Emphasis added.]

For anyone to argue that there is more yet to come, is speaking where the prophets do not speak, and worse yet they are contradicting what the prophets have said.

God's put his mystery in effect when times *reached their fulfillment*. Jesus proclaimed the *time has come* Mark 1:14-15:

14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The **time has come**," he said. "The **kingdom of God is near**. Repent and believe the good news!" [Emphasis added.]

Paul specifically identified the fullness of time with Christ's coming and his redemptive sacrifice in Gal 4:4-5:

4 But when **the time had fully come**, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, 5 to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. [Emphasis added.]

The Mystery of God Is Complete in Christ

All latter day prophecies and interpretations have in common the view that Christ, and by association, God, failed to set up an earthly kingdom. To the contrary, the mystery of God is complete in Christ. Paul refutes any modern idea of something yet to come—an earthly kingdom, thousand year reign, etc.—in Col 2:2-3

2 My purpose is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the **full riches of complete understanding**, in order that they may know the **mystery of God, namely, Christ**, 3 in whom are hidden **all the treasures** of wisdom and knowledge. [Emphasis added.]

When Paul said *full riches, complete understanding, and all the treasures*, he left no room for the contrary views advanced today. We may "know the mystery of God, namely, Christ."

God Disclosed His Mystery through the Church and to the Saints

God made his mystery, namely, Christ, plain. It is no secret, and it includes the unsearchable riches of Christ with nothing hidden to come later. In Eph 3:8-11, Paul wrote:

8 Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the **unsearchable riches** of Christ, 9 and to make **plain to everyone** the administration of **this mystery**, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. 10 His **intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God** should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the

heavenly realms, 11 according to his **eternal purpose** which he **accomplished in Christ** Jesus our Lord. [Emphasis added.]

The mystery is made known through the church to the saints, according to Col 1:25-27:

25 I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— 26 the **mystery** that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is **now disclosed to the saints**. 27 To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the **glorious riches of this mystery**, which is **Christ in you, the hope of glory**. [Emphasis added.]

The complete, glorious, and rich mystery of God is Christ in us; and that is the hope of glory, and not some future speculative events. But how is it that we receive it?

The Mystery of God Is in the Written Word, the Scriptures

Christians receive the treasures of wisdom and knowledge through the writings of the prophets. Paul describes how the mystery was revealed in Eph 3:2b-5:

Surely you have heard about the administration of God's grace that was given to me for you, 3 that is, the **mystery made known to me by revelation**, as I have already **written** briefly. 4 In **reading** this, then, you will be able to **understand my insight** into the **mystery of Christ**, 5 which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been **revealed by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets**. [Emphasis added.]

Nothing could be plainer: the mystery comes by revelation to the apostles and prophets; when we read, we may understand their insight.

Not only did apostles and prophets write, but also they did so by the command of God. Rom 16:25-27 teaches:

25 Now to him who is able to establish you by my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the **revelation of the mystery** hidden for long ages past, 26 but now revealed and **made known through the prophetic writings** by the **command of the eternal God**, so that all nations might believe and obey him— 27 to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen. [Emphasis added.]

God reveals his mystery to us by his written word. Both the writing of his word and the reading of his word is by the command of the eternal God.

The Kingdom of Christ Began

This study began with God saying when his mystery would be accomplished in Rev 10:7:

"7 But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets."

In Rev 11:15, the sounding of the trumpet of the seventh angel starts a set of events culminating in the reward of the righteous and punishment of the wicked:

15 The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said:

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom
of our Lord and of his Christ,
and he will reign for ever and ever."

The kingdom of Christ has taken the world, and his kingdom and his reign is forever and ever. Paul states the exact time of this event in Eph 1:19-23

That power is like the working of his mighty strength, 20 which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, 21 far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. 22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

God has accomplished his mystery when he raised Christ above all rule and authority, power and dominion. The teaching is all-inclusive in scope and in time (*not only in the present age but also in the one to come*).

Rewarding the Saints and Destroying Those Who Destroy the Earth

Rev 11:16-18 summarizes God's great victory as he took power over all things through his son, Jesus:

16 And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshiped God, 17 saying:

"We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty,
the One who is and who was,
because you have taken your great power
and have begun to reign.

18 The nations were angry;
and your wrath has come.

The time has come for judging the dead,
and for rewarding your servants the prophets
and your saints and those who reverence your name,
both small and great –
and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

The rest of *The Revelation* describes the fate of the dead, of the servants and saints, and of those who destroy the earth. Since these show the end of all things, a brief review is in order.

The End of the World and Worldliness

The great tool of the devil and the nemesis of humanity is the lust that leads to sin and the sin that leads to death. James 1:13-15 describes this danger:

13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

John wrote that man should not love the world or the things of the world in 1 John 2:15-17:

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world – the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does – comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

The accomplishment of God's mystery regarding worldliness is personified in the scarlet woman of *The Revelation* of whom it is written in Rev 17:5:

5 This title was written on her forehead:

MYSTERY

BABYLON THE GREAT

THE MOTHER OF PROSTITUTES

AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH.

Therefore Babylon, the worldly city, becomes a metaphor for worldliness, contrasted to the New Jerusalem, the heavenly city. Thus, the fate of Babylon is the fate of worldliness in Rev 18:9-10

9 "When the kings of the earth who committed adultery with her and shared her luxury see the smoke of her burning, they will weep and mourn over her. 10 Terrified at her torment, they will stand far off and cry:

"Woe! Woe, O great city,

O Babylon, city of power!

In one hour your doom has come!"

Worldliness will be destroyed, never to be found again, all of which was accomplished when Christ rose victoriously. Rev 18:21 describes this fate of worldliness:

21 Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said:

"With such violence

the great city of Babylon will be thrown down,

never to be found again.

The End of the Beast and the False Prophet

History finds much of humanity serving the carnal and fleshly side of their nature, represented in *The Revelation* by the beast and serving the pride of life and by voyeuristic excursions into man-made religions, represented in *The Revelation* by the false prophet. As with worldliness, these oppose all that is godly, aiming to destroy man one way or another, as it were. Rev 19:20 pronounces the doom of these personifications of evil at the accomplishment of God's mystery:

20 But the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who had performed the miraculous signs on his behalf. With these signs he had deluded those who had received the mark of the beast and worshiped his image. The two of them were thrown alive into the fiery lake of burning sulfur.

The End of the Devil

As with worldliness, the beast, and the false prophet, the devil's place in the accomplished mystery of God is the lake of burning sulfur in Rev 20:9-10:

But fire came down from heaven and devoured them. 10 And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown. They will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

The End of Death and Hades

Death and Hades, states brought on by sins of the world and temptations of the devil, also end up in the lake of fire in Rev 20:13-15

13 The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. 14 Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. 15 If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

The End for Evil Doers

The human victims of worldliness, the beast, the false prophet, and the devil, do not escape, but find themselves in the same place of torment as those who deceived them in Rev 21:8:

8 But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars – their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.

The End for Christians

The fate of Christians is completely different in the accomplished mystery of God. Rev 21:5-7 teaches:

5 He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true."

6 He said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. 7 He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son."

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. 2 Peter 1:20-21: From what cannot a prophecy of Scripture come? What is the origin of prophecy?
2. Gal 1:8: What happens to those who preach any other gospel?
3. Rev 22:18-19: What happens to those who add to or take away from the prophecies?
4. Rev 10:7: When will the mystery of God be accomplished?
5. Eph 1:9-10: In what did God purpose his mystery? What things were brought together?
6. Mark 1:14-15: Who said, "The time has come?" Where was the kingdom?
7. Gal 4:4-6: What did God do when the time was right?
8. Col 2:2-4: What is the nature of a Christian's understanding? What is hidden in Christ?
9. Eph 3:7-12: What did Paul preach? To whom was the mystery made plain? Through what was the manifold wisdom of God made known? This was according to what purpose?
10. Col 1:25-27: What does the glorious riches of God's mystery mean to us?
11. Eph 3:2b-6: How was the mystery made known to Paul? What did he do with it? What are we to do with it? By whom was mystery revealed? To whom was it revealed?
12. Rom 16:25-27: Through what writings was the mystery revealed? By whose command?
13. Rev 10:7: When would God' mystery be revealed? Through whom had he announced it.
14. Rev 11:15: What happened to the kingdom of the world? How long was the Christ's reign?

15. Eph 1:19-23: Where does Christ sit? What is he rule over? What is the fullness of Christ?
16. Rev 11:16-18: What time has come? Who will be rewarded?
17. James 1:13-15: What entices us? What does desire result in? What follows sin?
18. 1 John 2:15-17: What three things are in the world?
19. Rev 17:5: Who is Babylon the Great?
20. Rev 18:9-10: What will the kings of the earth say? What will happen to Babylon?
21. Rev 18:21: How complete is the end of Babylon
22. Rev 19:20-21: What is the end of the beast and false prophet?
23. Rev 20:9-10: What is the end of the devil?
24. Rev 20:13-15: What is the end of death and Hades? What is the lake of fire? Who will be thrown in?
25. Rev 21:8: What is the second death?
26. Rev 21:5-7: What will he who overcomes inherit? Of what will they drink?

13. The Prophetic End for the Righteous Is Eternal Life

Jesus was clear in his teaching that he was going to prepare a place for the righteous. He was also certain in his teaching that he would take the disciples back with him to his Father's house. In John 14:2-3, he taught:

2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.

He also taught that the righteous and the wicked would receive a reckoning for how they lived. He spoke of this in the parable of the sheep and the goats in Matt 25:31-33:

31 "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. 33 He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

The reckoning for the righteous was eternal life according to Matt 25:34: "Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" However, the reckoning for the wicked was eternal fire, according to Matt 25:41: "41 Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" The parable closes with an emphatic summary in Matt 25:46: "46 Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

The teaching—eternal life contrasted to eternal punishment—was central to the obedience to the gospel, as the Lord taught in Mark 16:15-16:

15 He said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation. 16 Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned.

Metaphorically, the New Testament prophecies describe the eternal life offered to believers in powerful and figurative language, such as the water of life, the tree of life, the crown of life, and the New Jerusalem. Each of the metaphors presents the idea of a heavenly home as an ever-increasing reality as the idea connects with symbolic language easily understood by Christians.

The Water of Life

Perhaps the river of life concept had its beginning in Jer 2:13, where God used it in reference to 13 "My people have committed two sins:

They have forsaken me,
the spring of living water,
and have dug their own cisterns,
broken cisterns that cannot hold water.

However, Jesus uses the metaphor to describe eternal life given by God and bought by his own blood. The woman at the well poses the question in John 4:10-11:

10 Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked him and he would have given you living water."

11 "Sir," the woman said, "you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?"

In John 4:13-14, Jesus answers connecting the living water to eternal life:

13 Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

Revelation teaches that all Christians who overcome receive "springs of living water." These are the Christians, who have endured and washed their robes in the blood of Jesus in Rev 7:14-17: "And he said, 'These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.'" In the description that follows, these Christians are before the throne of God, where the Lamb is at the center and where he leads them to springs of living water in Rev 7:17:

17 For the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd;
he will lead them to springs of living water.
And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."

The wonders of this blessing of living water are great and marvelous: we will serve God day and night; he will spread his tent over us; we will never hunger or thirst; the sun will not beat upon us.

This metaphor of living water from a river of life extends to the very end of *Revelation*. In Rev 21:6, the Lord said: "6 He said to me: 'It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life.'" Rev 22:1-2 places this spring in heaven itself:

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.

The invitation of the Lord offered at the very end of *Revelation* in Rev 22:17 restates the wonderful promise:

17 The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life."

The Tree of Life

The metaphor, *tree of life*, just like *the living water*, describes heaven's glory in a way that we can understand. The symbolism begins in the beginning in Gen 2:9:

9 And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground – trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The tree of life was so important that God protected it from fallen man, connecting it in meaning to eternal life in Gen 3:22:

22 And the Lord God said, "The man has now become like one of us, knowing good and evil. He must not be allowed to reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life and eat, and live forever."

Thus, God reserved the tree of life (eternal life) as the final reward for man. The Lord returned to it when he addressed the seven churches of Asia in *Revelation*. In Rev 2:7, the Lord

identified the tree of life as a promise to Christians who overcome and placed it in the paradise of God:

7 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.

The passage clearly asserts the tree is in the paradise of God; and Rev 22:1-2 places the tree of life in the heavenly city on each side of the river of life:

22 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life. . . .

Paradise of God and the heavenly city are the same; and so are the river of life and the tree of life. In Rev 7, the lesson saw the living water going to those who "are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Now, in Rev 22:14-15, those who washed their robes have a right to the tree of life:

14 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. 15 Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

Not only are these evil doers excluded from the tree of life, but perverters of God's revelation are also excluded in Rev 22:19:

19 And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

The Paradise of God

Above, Jesus spoke of the tree of life as the paradise of God, and John later in *Revelation* found that tree in the heavenly city, making a direct connection between paradise of God and heaven. Jesus introduced the symbol of paradise in response to the thief on the cross, who asked in Luke 23:42: "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered in a most definitive way in verse 43: "Jesus answered him, 'I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.'"

Paul used the word in 2 Cor 12:2-4 to describe a man who was taken up to the third heaven (contemporaries understood this to be the heaven where God is; and indeed, the Bible teaches only of three heavens:

2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know – God knows. 3 And I know that this man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows – 4 was caught up to paradise. He heard inexpressible things, things that man is not permitted to tell.

The issue of three heavens versus the seven of the Jews and Muslims is explained by Barnes:

[To the third heaven] The Jews sometimes speak of seven heavens, and Muhammed has borrowed this idea from the Jews. But the Bible speaks of but three heavens, and among the Jews in the apostolic ages also the heavens were divided into three:

(1) The aerial, including the clouds and the atmosphere, the heavens above us, until we come to the stars.

(2) The starry heavens, the heavens in which the sun, moon, and stars appear to be situated.

(3) The heavens beyond the stars. That heaven was supposed to be the residence of God, of angels, and of holy spirits. It was this upper heaven, the dwelling-place of God, to which Paul was taken, and whose wonders he was permitted to behold—this region where God dwelt; where Christ was seated at the right hand of the Father, and where the spirits of the just were assembled. (from Barnes' Notes, Electronic Database Copyright © 1997, 2003, 2005, 2006 by BibleSoft, Inc. All rights reserved.)

Once again paradise and heaven become synonymous.

Some interpret *Abraham's bosom* in the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in Luke 16:22-26, as *paradise*, which may well be the case. However, it cannot be, as is taught, a division of Hades, the realm of the dead, where the rich man was in torment and heaven at the same time. Whatever the case, the righteous dead go immediately to a state of bliss; and those who die to sin and die literally in the Lord share this state of bliss. The Lord promised Daniel this state in Dan 12:13: "13 "As for you, go your way till the end. You will rest, and then at the end of the days you will rise to receive your allotted inheritance." Rev 6:9-11 describes the destiny of the souls of those who die to sin and die physically in the Lord:

I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained. 10 They called out in a loud voice, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" 11 Then each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to wait a little longer, until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been was completed.

The death that killed the fellow servants is the death Paul spoke of in 1 Cor 15:31-32: "31 I die every day — I mean that, brothers — just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Crown of Life

By persevering under trial and temptation, by being patient in suffering, by suffering persecution, and by being faithful unto death, Christians are promised the crown of life. Of overcoming temptation and trial, James wrote in James 1:12:

12 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.

By being faithful unto the point of death, Jesus promised the crown of life in Rev 2:10:

10 Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.

As Paul's life was about to end, he said in 2 Tim 4:7: "7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith." Based on this, he was confident that he would receive the crown of righteousness, and concluded in 2 Tim 4:8:

8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day — and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

The New Jerusalem

The Bible portrays the heavenly home of the saved as the New or the Heavenly Jerusalem. Christians come to that reality before they die in its synonymous form, the church. The Hebrew writer put these together in Heb 12:22-23:

22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the **heavenly Jerusalem**, the **city** of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in **joyful assembly**, **23 to the church** of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. [Emphasis added]

Revelation extends this same city into heaven in Rev 3:12:

12 Him who overcomes I will make a pillar in the temple of my God. Never again will he leave it. I will write on him the name of my God and the **name of the city** of my God, **the new Jerusalem**, which is coming down out of heaven from my God; and I will also write on him my new name. [Emphasis added]

In Rev 21:2-4, The Holy City is the new Jerusalem, where God and His throne are and where pain and sorrow and death are no more:

2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Study Questions from the Scriptures

1. John 14:2-3: How many rooms are in the Father's house? What is Jesus preparing?
2. Matt 25:31-33:31 When Jesus comes, where will he be sitting? What will he do with the sheep and the goats? Who are the sheep and goats?
3. Matt 25:34: What will happen to those on the right hand?
4. Matt 25:41: What will happen to those on the left hand?
5. Matt 25:46: Who will get eternal life?
6. Mark 16:15-16:15: What will happen to those who believe and are baptized? What will happen to those who do not believe?
7. Jer 2:13: Who is the spring of living water? Where were they looking for water?
8. John 4:10-11: For what should the women at the well have asked? What would Jesus have?
9. John 4:13-14: What does the water that Jesus gives well up to? What will never happen again if you the water given by Jesus?
10. Rev 7:14-17: Who has washed their robes and made them white?
11. Rev 7:17: Who is in the center of the throne of God? To what does he lead us?
12. Rev 21:6-7: Who gives us to drink without cost?
13. Rev 22:1-2: What does the river of the water of life look like?
14. Rev 22:17:17: What free gift is offered the thirsty? Who says, "Come"
15. Gen 2:9: What was in the middle of the Garden of Eden?
16. Gen 3:22: What did God keep from man? Why?
17. Rev 2:7: What will Jesus give those who overcome? What is the tree of life called?
18. Rev 22:1-3: Where is the tree of life?
19. Rev 22:14-15: Who is kept from the tree of life? Who is blessed?

20. Rev 22:19: If we take away from this book of prophecy, what will God take away from us?
21. Luke 23:42: What did the thief on the cross ask for? Where did Jesus say that the thief would be on that day?
22. 2 Cor 12:2-4: What is the third heaven? What is paradise?
23. Luke 16:22-26: What parable is found here?
24. Dan 12:13: What would happen to Daniel between his end and the end of the days? What will he receive at the end of the days?
25. Rev 6:9-11: What were those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained told to do?
26. 1 Cor 15:31-32: How many times did Paul die?
27. James 1:12: What will the ones, who persevere trial and temptation, receive?
28. Rev 2:10: What will those faithful to the point of death receive?
29. 2 Tim 4:7: What was Paul to receive? What had he done?
30. Heb 12:22-23: What is the heavenly Jerusalem? To what else did they come? Where are the names of the church written?
31. Rev 3:12-13: What will be written on those who overcome?
32. Rev 21:2-4: What is the Holy City? Who is the bride of Christ? Where will the dwelling of God be? What will God himself do? What will not be in heaven?