

JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY

Week 1 – The King and His Kingdom

The story continues. . . . The story of God’s plan of redemption. The story is the true account of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, the Promised One of Israel. This story is throughout the Bible – OT and NT. There is only one way of salvation in the Bible – by grace through faith in God’s revealed message which always points to Jesus! OT saints weren’t saved by the law. The law cannot save. Rom. 3:20 – by the law no one is justified – no one is declared righteous. The law shows us we cannot keep the law. The law shows us we need a Savior. God is faithful. He has provided THE way – Jesus! Because He is faithful, we know that He will deliver on the promises that He has made to Israel which will impact all of us. The promises that God made to Israel will impact the WORLD! He has delivered on many of those promises. Jesus came according to the Messianic prophecies. Many promises have yet to be fulfilled; Jesus is coming again. Thus – the title of this class: Jesus, Israel & Prophecy. They are inseparable; they are intertwined.

The story of God’s remarkable, gracious, loving plan of redemption continues. . . .

Matthew 4:17 - ¹⁷ *From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

Why would Jesus preach about the kingdom of heaven specifically? What does that mean? What does “is at hand” mean? The Gospel of Matthew explains what Jesus was preaching. The Gospel of Matthew is a bridge between the Old and New Testaments. Matthew deals primarily with the life of Jesus as fulfilling OT prophecies relating to the coming King Who was going to deliver the Kingdom that God promised to the Jewish people. The kingdom of heaven/the kingdom of God is at hand because the King had come to earth. The King was here!

Are we living in the Kingdom age now – in the Millennial Kingdom? Is Jesus reigning from King David’s throne in Jerusalem? NO!

Hab. 2:14 – *“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.”*

Is this occurring now? No!

Rev. 20:1-3 – *“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. ² He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the devil and satan, and bound him for a thousand years; ³ and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished.”*

Is satan currently bound? NO!

What happened? If Jesus came to deliver the kingdom and we’re not living in the Millennial Kingdom, what happened? Jesus clearly presented Himself as the prophesied King, the Son of David, Who had the right to reign on earth. We see this from the outset of Matthew – from Jesus’ genealogy. Jesus is a descendant of King David. Jesus has

the right to rule as King. And, this right to rule continues as we see His ministry unfold. Jesus displays signs that proclaim – that announce to Israel - Who He is.

The Magi who were Gentiles from Persia came to Jerusalem to find the King of the Jews. Zechariah 9:9 states that Israel’s king comes – riding on the colt of a donkey. The sign over Jesus’ head on the cross reads Yeshua of Nazareth, King of the Jews (John 19:19).

The Kingdom of God on earth was not delivered to Israel at Jesus first coming because Israel did not repent of their sins and receive their Messiah. However, many Jewish people individually came to faith in Jesus. The first believers in Jesus were Jewish. Is God finished with Israel? NO! Rom. 11:1 - *“I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not!”* Certainly not – God forbid! God will deliver on His promises to Israel when Israel as a nation repents. Read Zech. 12:10ff.

Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures, God had told the Jewish people they needed to repent as a nation and then the Kingdom of God would be given to them. Repentance – they needed to acknowledge their sin, to be sorrowful over their sin; they needed to change direction from rebelling against God to trusting in and submitting to God. Jesus, in His preaching about the Kingdom of God, spoke of the kind of righteousness necessary for entering that Kingdom – not self-righteousness but God’s righteousness.

Last term we ended with the first cleansing of the Temple in Jerusalem – at the outset of Jesus’ public ministry. We find that account in John 2. How did the people respond?

John 2:23 – *“Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did.”*

Let’s look at another response to that cleansing. We find it in John 3:1-2 – *“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. ² This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, “Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him.”*

Observations:

- Nicodemus was a Jewish religious leader – a Pharisee. As a “ruler of the Jews,” Nicodemus is noted as a member of the Sanhedrin.
 - The Pharisees (were from the Scribes) were the “separatists” – they strictly adhered to the law.
 - Pharisaic Judaism believed that “All Israel has a share in the world to come.” (Mishnah - San 10:1) and also that those who are Abraham's disciples will inherit it (Avot 5:19).
 - Another part of Pharisaic theology, from the Mishnah (the Talmud) stated “Abraham sits at the gates of Gehenna to save any Israelite consigned thereto.” In other words, Abraham blocked the way for any Jew entering hell. According to Pharisaism, to be born a Jew physically was enough to enter the Kingdom of God. While Gentiles had to convert to Judaism, Jews, by virtue of being born Jewish, qualified for entrance into the Kingdom of God.

- The Great Sanhedrin was the supreme court of ancient Israel, made up of 70 men and the high priest. The Sanhedrin were the ones to whom all questions of law were addressed.
- Nicodemus visited Jesus at night – under the cloak of darkness. What does that tell us? It appears that Nicodemus did not wish to be seen.
 - Why? Nicodemus appears to know that the Jewish religious leaders in Israel were investigating Jesus. Note: Matt. 3:7-12; John 1:19-28; John 2:19-20.
 - He was a Pharisee – a religious conservatist – a pious one – a separated one.
 - The Pharisees made every effort to keep Judaism pure of heathen influences. BUT – they were highly ritualistic and legalistic – and focused on the EXTERNALS – as we’ve already seen.
 - Pharisees adhered not only to the 613 commandments of God in the Torah – they embellished – adding more commandments to the Law which were called – the oral law – many times – esteemed more highly than God’s written Law.
 - Nicodemus was also a ruler of the Jews – a member of the Sanhedrin – which was the main ruling body of the Jews in Israel. This was the highest and most powerful religious and political body within Judaism.
 - Nicodemus must have had to overcome great difficulties in coming to speak with Jesus.
 - Jesus had not come to ally Himself with traditional Judaism – but to tell them – based on the Hebrew Scriptures - that they needed to REPENT.
 - BUT GOD – was drawing Nicodemus.
 - We do NOT YET see a saved Nicodemus; not in John 3. BUT we see Nicodemus taking a stand for Jesus in John 7:50-52. AND in John 19:39 we see Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea coming forth publicly to bury Jesus when all the disciples had fled.
 - “Nicodemus” – Greek name – “victor over the people.”
- Nicodemus addresses Jesus as “Rabbi” – teacher – a revered one within the Jewish community.
 - Nicodemus then states that Jesus has a connection to God in that God sent Jesus to the children of Israel.
 - According to Nicodemus, what was the basis for being sent from God? The signs that Jesus has displayed. These signs spoke to Jesus as the Messiah! The Jewish people knew that the Messiah would be sent from God (Gen. 49:10; Deut. 18:15-18; Psa. 2; Isa. 7:14; Isa. 9:6; Isa. 42 – Isa. 53; Micah 5:2. . .)
 - Signs - in the Gospel of John speak to Jesus’ identity as the Messiah.
- Nicodemus’ comments not only represent his thoughts about Jesus, but the thoughts of others as well - “WE know that you are a teacher come from God. . . .”

How does Jesus respond?

John 3:3 – “Jesus answered and said to him, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.”

Jesus never answered Nicodemus directly. Jesus lifted Nicodemus to HIS, Jesus’, standpoint – HIS message – HIS priority/perspective! To Jesus it was all about the Kingdom of God and entrance into that kingdom. However, if we’re to understand this dialogue between Nicodemus and Jesus, we need to remember that Jesus, as a Jew, knew the views of Jewish people – the views of the Jewish religious leadership. Rabbis often used and still use “rebirth” as a metaphor to describe the change of a person’s status.

Jewish thought regarding “rebirth”:

- When Gentiles converted to Judaism, they were said to be born anew – born again. The Talmud describes a convert to Judaism as a newborn infant (b. Yeb 22a, 62a, 48b; y. Bik 3:3 vii).
- Rebirth also occurs on a man’s wedding day; when he takes a wife, he becomes like a newborn child (y. Bik 3:3 vii).
- Jewish tradition teaches that when Israel offered sacrifices to God on Rosh Hashanah (the Feast of Trumpets, or Jewish New Year; Lev. 23:24), God considered it as though He had created them as a new being (Lev. Rab. 29:12).
- God also told Moses that he would create him into a new being when he called Moses to speak as God’s representative (Rab. 3:15). This view is from the Talmud (Rabbinic opinion), not the Bible.
- The king of Israel was also considered to experience new birth when he became the king. The king functioned as God’s representative to Israel; therefore, his status changed at his inauguration and he experienced new birth (Yalkut on I Sam. 13).
- The Chief of the Academy on his promotion was also likened to those newly born (Yalkut on I Sam. 13).

According to the Rabbis, this second birth was the consequence of having taken upon oneself “the Kingdom of God” via achievements – via striving. What does the Bible teach about the Kingdom of God? Mostly simply explained, the Kingdom of God is God’s rule. Scripture speaks of the earthly Kingdom of God when Jesus will rule and reign for 1,000 years. Scripture speaks of a spiritual rule of God in the hearts of those who have a personal relationship with Him (John 1:12-13).

Nicodemus asks Jesus, “*How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?*” Within Jewish thought, new birth addresses accomplishing milestones in life. In Nicodemus thinking, this teacher sent from God, Jesus, is requiring me to go through the physical birth process again so that I can accomplish more milestones in my physical life.

Nicodemus was not confused re: being born again. He understood new birth from a Jewish perspective. What was confusing to him was how it was possible for a man to be

born again when he had already accomplished the new birth milestones. The only way Nicodemus could grasp being born again was to re-enter his mother's womb and be physically born again and accomplish more.

Jesus clearly explained, *“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* (John 3:5-6).

John 3:6 gives us the understanding of being born of water – which is being born of the flesh – a physical birth. When a woman delivers a baby, her water breaks. To the Jewish person, physical birth as a Jew had great significance. Jesus then explains that being born of the Spirit has nothing to do with ethnicity – with being born Jewish or Gentile. Being born of the Spirit is a supernatural/spiritual happening – *“that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”* Being born again is being born of water (you must have been born into this life) and of the Spirit – born from above – born of God!

Entrance into the Kingdom of God is totally OF GOD! We need to understand this entrance into the absolute rule of God NOT as an improvement upon our present state. Entrance into the Kingdom of God – coming under the absolute rule of God must be by way of submission of heart, mind and life to Him as our Divine King. It is not based on striving, on achievements, on performing deeds. This birth comes from above – from God and God alone! New birth occurs when God transforms an individual and gives him/her a new heart (John 3:3; Eze. 36:26; Jer. 31:33). This is the spiritual awakening of a person who becomes a child of God (John 3:6-8; John 1:12-13).

John 3:7-8 – *“Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’ ⁸ The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.”*

Just as the wind cannot be controlled or understood by human beings but its effects can be witnessed, so also it is with the Holy Spirit. He cannot be controlled or completely understood, but the proof of His work is apparent. When He is at work, there is undeniable evidence! When God is at work lives are changed!

John 3:9 – *“Nicodemus answered and said to Him, ‘How can these things be?’”*

Nicodemus is confused – because he has not as yet experienced being born of the Spirit!

John 3:10 – *“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Are you the teacher of Israel, and do not know these things?’”*

Obviously, Nicodemus was an established, renowned master teacher in Israel. He enjoyed a high standing among the Rabbis and the other teachers of his day. What should Nicodemus have known? HIS SCRIPTURES!!! Jer. 31:33 and Eze. 36:25-27 – God promised that He would give the children of Israel a new heart, that He would put His Spirit in them, and that He would take away their sins! This is the New Covenant! In reading Jesus' words to Nicodemus in John 3, we can understand that these truths about the New Covenant are in the Hebrew Scriptures. This is not a new story!

Jesus' reply emphasized the spiritual bankruptcy – the lack of understanding of the nation of Israel at that time since “the” teacher of Israel did not recognize the teaching re: spiritual cleansing from the Hebrew Scriptures.

John 3:11-17 – “Most assuredly, I say to you, We speak what We know and testify what We have seen, and you do not receive Our witness. ¹² If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe, how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things? ¹³ No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.^[a] ¹⁴ And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in Him should not perish but^[b] have eternal life. ¹⁶ For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. ¹⁷ For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

“Believe” is mentioned seven times in the passage from John 3:11-21. The new birth must be appropriated – made your own – by an act of faith. (Gen. 15:6)

John 3:1-10 centers on the divine initiative in salvation. We see God at work.

John 3:11-21 emphasizes the human reaction to God's work in redemption.

John 3:12 – a simple look at earthly things, like the illustrations Jesus used along with Nicodemus looking at his own life, should have made Jesus' point plain to Nicodemus. If Nicodemus couldn't see that he needed this spiritual transformation, what more could Jesus have told him?

John 3:13 - only Jesus has the true knowledge regarding heavenly wisdom. He alone has left heaven to come to earth.

John 3:14 – This is a forward look at Jesus' death on the cross. In Num. 21:5-9, the children of Israel who looked at the serpent lifted up by Moses were healed. Those who look to Jesus Who would be lifted up on the cross will live spiritually and eternally.

John 3:16 – “For God so loved the world. . . .” The Jews of that day rarely thought that God loved the world. They thought that God only loved – period. Throughout the Hebrew Scriptures we read of God's plan of salvation reaching beyond the Jews to the Gentiles as well (Gen. 12:3; Isa. 49:6). Within Rabbinic Jewish practice, there was much more emphasis on salvation for Israel.

“. . . that He gave His only begotten Son. . . .” Begotten – unique; one of a kind. “Son” – Psa. 2:12; Prov. 30:4; Isa. 9:6.

Israel – sons by adoption (Rom. 9:4) – brought into a right relationship with God. Jesus is THE Son – not adopted – He is God! Adoption – taken from one family and placed into another.

“. . . that whoever believes in Him. . . .” – God loves the world, but the world does not receive or benefit from that love until it believes in Jesus. Believes in means to trust in, to rely on, and to cling to. (Psa. 2:12)

“. . . should not perish. . . .” – God’s love saves man from eternal destruction. God looks at fallen humanity, does not want it to perish, and so, in His love, He extends the gift of salvation in Jesus the Messiah.

“. . . but have everlasting life.” God’s love will never change. He will never stop loving those who trust in Him – even unto the furthest distance of eternity. “Once saved, completely saved”. Jesus died for your sins. Which ones? Past, present, and future. If you think you can lose your salvation – then you must think you did something to earn your salvation. If you think you can lose your salvation by some future sin – think again. Jesus died for that future sin too!

John 3:19 – “This is the condemnation. . . .” – Jesus came to bring salvation; but those who reject that salvation condemn themselves.

“Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil.” Light exposes sin!
People will not believe because they love their sin.

When we think of sin that sends people to hell, we often think of “notorious” sin. We give sin labels. However, our veering toward demanding to be lord of my own life (I think, I feel. . . .) is enough of a sin to deserve condemnation before God!

“Everyone practicing evil hates the light.” How do people hate the light of God’s truth? Some express their hatred by actively fighting against it. Others express their hatred by ignoring God’s truth – by saying to Jesus, “You are not worth my time.”

What we have in this passage is a radical rebirth – not achieved by human efforts but by the Spirit of GOD.

Jesus wasn’t a man sent from God. He is GOD in the flesh – IMMANUEL!
He is to be exalted – lifted up – on a cross – at His FIRST COMING.

When we share Jesus with people, our responsibility is not to get men to sign on the dotted line – but to confront them with the TRUTH!

“For God so loved the WORLD. . . .”

Why didn’t God deliver the Kingdom – the physical/material kingdom – to the Jewish people during Jesus’ first coming?

They did not repent as a nation.

Scripture foretold that the Messiah came first to die for sin.

- Rev. 13:8 – He is the Lamb of God slain from the foundation of the world. Jesus had to die. Jesus first came as the Suffering Servant (Isa. 53).
- Isa. 53:5-6 - *He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. ⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*”

- Isa. 53:3 - *“He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”*

Jesus told the disciples that He would build His Church (Matt. 16:18). The Church is the body of Christ (Eph. 3:6 – that the Gentiles would be fellow heirs with the Jews) comprised of Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus. The door was opened wider to the Gentiles re: salvation following Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Rom. 15:7-12 - The call of this passage is a call for rejoicing that God in His saving plan has brought Jewish believers and Gentile believers together and has made us one body in Christ.

Jesus had promised that He would send the Holy Spirit. John 16:7-8 – *“It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.”*⁸ *And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment.”*

Jesus spoke of His departure from this world (Matt. 16:21; Luke 19:11-12; John 2:19; John 14:1ff. . . .)

The giving of the physical/material kingdom that God promised to the Jewish people was postponed because, as a nation, they did not repent of their sins and trust in God – through the Messiah.

As a NATION they were to repent of their sins and trust in God and in His promise of the Messiah. Check out Isa. 55 and Joel 2:12 (Turn to Me with all your heart). God’s message to Israel was to turn to Him, to place their trust in Him.

Psalm 2:12 – *“Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.”*

The Kingdom of God will be delivered to the Jewish people – those who come to faith in their Messiah, Jesus! How do we know. Check out the last page of your handout – John MacArthur’s comments about the physical/material kingdom that will be given to Israel – and the corresponding Scripture.

And, the Gentiles will rule and reign with Jesus in the Kingdom as well (II Tim. 2:12).

“For God so loved the world!”

QUESTIONS:

- Is Jesus the Messiah? Give Scriptural support.
- Did you learn anything new regarding being born again?
- Is being born again important?

- How do you understand the Kingdom of God?
- What questions do you have?

SUGGESTED HOMEWORK:

- Read John MacArthur's comments and Biblical references re: Israel's future kingdom (page is part of handout for week 1).
- Why did Jesus perform miracles?
- In the OT, what does it say about the miracles that the Messiah would perform?

ISAIAH'S DESCRIPTION OF ISRAEL'S FUTURE KINGDOM (MacArthur's Study Bible)

- The Lord will restore the faithful remnant of Israel (saved Jewish people; Jewish believers) to the Land to inhabit the Kingdom at its beginning: Isaiah 1:9, 25-27; 3:10; 4:3; 6:13; 8:10; 9:1; 10:20, 22, 25, 27; 11:11, 12, 16; 14:1-2; 14:22, 26; 26:1-4; 27:12; 28:5; 35:9; 37:4, 31, 32; 40:2-3; 41:9; 43:5-6; 49:5, 8; 49:12, 22; 51:11; 54:7-10; 55:12; 57:13, 18; 60:4; 61:1-4, 7; 65:8-10; 66:8, 9, 19.
- As the Lord defeats Israel's enemies, He will provide protection for His people: Isaiah 4:5, 6; 9:1, 4; 12:1-6; 13:4; 14:2; 21:9; 26:4, 5; 27:1-4; 30:30-31; 32:2; 33:16, 22; 35:4; 49:17-18; 52:6; 54:9-10; 55:10-11; 58:12; 60:10, 12, 18; 62:9; 66:16.
- In her Kingdom, Israel will enjoy great prosperity of many kinds: Isaiah 26:15, 19; 27:2, 13; 29:18-20; 22:22-23; 30:20; 32:3; 32:15-20; 33:6, 24; 35:3, 5, 6, 8-10; 40:11; 42:6-7, 16; 43:5-6, 8, 10, 21; 44:5, 14; 46:13; 48:6; 49:10; 52:9; 54:2-3; 55:1, 12; 58:9, 14; 60:5, 16, 21; 61:4, 6-10; 62:5; 65:13-15, 18, 24; 66:21-22.
- The city of Jerusalem will rise to world preeminence in the Kingdom: Isaiah 2:2-4; 18:7; 25:6; 40:5, 9; 49:19-21; 60:1-5, 13-15, 17; 62:3-4.
- Israel will be the center of world attention in the Kingdom: Isaiah 23:18; 54:1-3; 55:5; 56:6-8; 60:5-9; 66:18-21.
- Israel's mission in the Kingdom will be to glorify the Lord: Isaiah 60:21; 61:3.
- Gentiles in the Kingdom will receive blessing through the channel of faithful Israel: Isaiah 11:10; 19:18, 24-25; 42:6; 45:22-23; 49:6; 51:5; 56:3, 6-8; 60:3, 7, 8; 61:5; 66:19.
- Worldwide peace will prevail in the Kingdom under the rule of the Prince of Peace: Isaiah 2:4; 9:5-6; 11:10; 19:23; 26:12; 32:18; 54:14; 57:19; 66:12.
- Moral and spiritual conditions in the Kingdom will reach their highest plane since the Fall of Adam: Isaiah 27:6; 28:6, 17; 32:16; 42:7; 44:3; 45:8; 51:4; 61:11; 65:21-22.
- Governmental leadership in the Kingdom will be superlative (of the highest quality; excellent; magnificent) with the Messiah heading it up: Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:2-3; 16:5; 24:23; 25:3; 32:1; 32:5; 33:22; 42:1, 4; 43:15; 52:13; 53:12; 55:3-5.
- Humans will enjoy long life in the Kingdom: Isaiah 65:20, 22.
- Knowledge of the Lord will be universal in the Kingdom: Isaiah 11:9; 19:21; 33:13; 40:5; 41:20; 45:6, 14; 49:26; 52:10, 13, 15; 54:13; 66:23.
- The world of nature will enjoy a great renewal in the Kingdom: Isaiah 12:3; 30:23-26; 32:15; 35:1-4, 6-7; 41:18-19; 43:19-20; 44:3, 23; 55:1-2, 13; 58:10-11.
- "Wild" animals will be tame in the Kingdom: Isaiah 11:6-9; 35:9; 65:25.
- Sorrow and mourning will not exist in the Kingdom: Isaiah 25:8; 60:20.
- An eternal Kingdom, as a part of God's new creation, will follow the Millennial Kingdom: Isaiah 24:23; 51:6, 16; 54:11-12; 60:11, 19; 65:17.
- The King will judge overt sin in the Kingdom: Isaiah 66:24.

