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How will it all End?

The apostle had written a lot about the purpose of God before mentioning the part the Jews still have to play. But when he asked the question: “*Has God rejected his people?*” his answer was emphatic and detailed:

“By no means! For I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. **God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew**” (Romans 11:1,2).

Paul then explained that their rejection was only temporary and that God still has the gracious intention of restoring the Jews to a special place in His affections. They have a key part to play in the events of the last days.

❖ **Last Days**

We have not yet encountered the phrase “*the last days*” in our look at Bible teaching, perhaps because it is not a phrase Paul uses in Romans, although he does mention it elsewhere. Writing to Timothy the apostle says this about the period in question:

*“Understand this, that **in the last days** there will come times of difficulty. For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having the appearance of godliness, but denying its power. Avoid such people”* (2 Timothy 3:1-5).

He was writing about a world that is astray from God because of the various things he lists, beginning with the crucial one that “*people will be **lovers of self** ... rather than lovers of God*”. There are many warnings in Scripture about the dangers of the world and its deceptive ways, and it is clearly prophesied that things will get steadily worse before God intervenes to establish His kingdom on earth.

We have already seen how the Lord himself listed the events that were due to take place over the generations after the Jews had been displaced from Jerusalem, and how he said that they would return at a time of unparalleled concern for the world.¹ To predict the return of the Jews after more than 1800 years was itself marvellous; to know that the world would be in turmoil at the time of their return was also remarkable. Only God, who knows the future, could possibly have given the Lord Jesus such prophetic insight and he readily acknowledged that to be the case.²

He also said that his coming would be at a time of widespread immorality and increasing violence, for he likened those days to the times of both Noah and Lot:

“Just as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of Man. They were eating and drinking and marrying and being given in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot – they were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building, but on the day when Lot went out from Sodom, fire and sulphur rained from heaven and destroyed them all – so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed. On that day, let the one who is on the housetop, with his goods in the house, not come down to take them away, and likewise let the one who is in the field not turn back. Remember Lot’s wife” (Luke 17:26-32).

Jesus was not saying that there is anything wrong with eating, drinking, getting married, or with the other things he mentions, but that many people who live in the “*days of the Son of Man*” will be doing nothing else. For, in the days of Noah and Lot, the people who lived alongside them did nothing else: they had no sense of impending destruction. Death overtook them whilst they were busy with the concerns and enjoyments of everyday life. Jesus said that it will be like that again when he comes as king.

¹ Chapter 21 page 317.

² Jesus was always quick to attribute his remarkable abilities to his Father, as gifts he had received (see John 14:10).

❖ The End

The end of everything will herald a new beginning for those who are aware of God's purpose and have prepared their lives accordingly. The coming kingdom will bring to an end human government and will replace it with divine rulership all over the earth. Over time all opposition will be subdued and the influence of the new rulership – that of the Lord Jesus Christ and his immortal saints – will gradually extend.

About 600 years before Jesus was born there was a mighty monarch who ruled the then dominant kingdom of Babylon – ancient Iraq. He ruled the inhabited or civilized world but one night he had a troubling dream. When it was recalled and interpreted by the prophet Daniel, it turned out to forecast part of human history – the part that world empires would play. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, saw in his dream a huge multi-metalled statue with a head of gold, a breast and arms of silver, a bronze belly and thighs and legs of iron. The feet were the really curious part – they were an unstable mixture of clay and iron, materials that do not stick together. So the whole thing was standing on a very shaky base and suddenly something happened which brought it all crashing down.

A stone was dislodged from a mountain without any human intervention and it fell upon the feet of the great statue and felled it. The result was that the whole thing was broken to pieces, like chaff on a threshing floor, and the wind blew all the bits of the statue away, leaving just the stone which grew and grew until it was the size of a mountain that filled the whole earth. In this one vision the future of world rulership was foretold for, as you would now expect having seen other Bible prophecies, we are not left to guess what it meant. Daniel gave the king a detailed explanation, both of what he had seen and what it meant:

“This was the dream. Now we will tell the king its interpretation. You, O king, the king of kings, to whom the God of heaven has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory, and into whose hand he has given, wherever they dwell, the children of man, the beasts of the field, and the birds of the heavens, making you rule over them all – you are the head of gold. Another kingdom inferior to you shall arise after you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the

*earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things. And like iron that crushes, it shall break and crush all these. And as you saw the feet and toes, partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, it shall be a divided kingdom, but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it, just as you saw iron mixed with the soft clay. And as the toes of the feet were partly iron and partly clay, so the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly brittle. As you saw the iron mixed with soft clay, so they will mix with one another in marriage, but they will not hold together, just as iron does not mix with clay. **And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure”** (Daniel 2:36-45).*

❖ World History

The first thing to note is that the Kingdom of God, which replaces the four world empires that precede it, is as much a world power as they were: it replaces them and takes control of the world. But it does so gradually: the stone first breaks in pieces those kingdoms, removes all traces of their influence and existence, and then grows to fill the earth.

We are in a privileged position to be able to look back over history and see the way in which all this came about exactly as predicted. There were only four empires that ruled with absolute power in the world and which held control over the land and people of Israel. Three of them are clearly identified within the book of Daniel, and the fourth is indicated though not precisely identified.³ This is how history worked out:

³ Nebuchadnezzar's dream was followed by a series of other visions. In one, the next two world empires are seen in conflict and are identified as Medo-Persia and Greece (Daniel 8:20-21) and in a very detailed forecast of future events the fourth empire (Rome) is indicated by the expression “the ships of Kittim” (11:30).



Head
Gold
BABYLON

Chest & Arms
Silver
MEDO-PERSIA

Middle & Thighs
Bronze
GREECE

Legs
Iron
ROME

Feet
Part Iron part Clay
DIVIDED KINGDOM



Stone
GOD'S COMING KINGDOM

Babylon	606-539 BC	<i>Daniel 2:48</i>
Medo-Persia	539-334 BC	<i>Daniel 8:20</i>
Greece	334-67 BC	<i>Daniel 8:21</i>
Rome	BC 67-1453 AD	<i>Daniel 11:30</i>

After Babylon came three other empires, each power in turn having control of the nation of Israel, until the Romans conquered Jerusalem in A.D. 70 and dispersed the Jews into other countries. The Roman empire continued, later becoming two parts - East and West - until A.D. 1453. By that time⁴ there were many other powerful nations and no one empire held control of the world, as Rome and its predecessors had once done. Daniel predicted that a mix of nations, some strong and some weak, would succeed those four great empires and a very unstable mix it has proved to be. For things have happened exactly as he foretold.

Many attempts have been made over the years to forge alliances, make treaties, have special agreements, create a League of Nations, a United Nations, a Commonwealth, the European Union, a bloc of nations. All sorts of arrangements have been tried and all have failed to achieve the desired outcome. National sovereignty and the rights and interests of particular nations are always the dominant feature, so the world very seldom unites with one common goal. Trade agreements, quotas, international accords and treaties all fail sooner or later, unless nations are absolutely agreed that something is wholly in their common interest.

❖ **Jews in Jerusalem**

The world is now exactly in the state that Daniel foretold would occur before the coming of the stone power - the one that would break all existing world powers and would gradually take control. Our world is very unstable and many people are anxious for the future. Right at the centre of three continents - Europe, Asia and Africa - the Jewish nation exists again, just as Jesus predicted would occur. Jerusalem was occupied by other powers for nearly 2000 years but in 1948 the nation of Israel was re-established and in 1967 the Jewish people conquered east Jerusalem and thus took major control of their capital city once again. Jesus made this detailed predication about Jerusalem and the world at that time:

⁴ *The Western Roman Empire had, in fact, fallen in A.D. 476 when Rome was conquered by the Vandals, after which the Eastern part continued, with its capital at Constantinople.*

*“They (the Jewish people) will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles, **until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.** And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.** Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near” (Luke 21:24-28).*

Jesus said that when “the times of the Gentiles” were fulfilled, the city would no longer be trampled underfoot.⁵ The Jews are God’s witnesses of His unfolding purpose and their return to the land and the city signals that the end of everything is now very near. There is a power coming which will destroy all human governments and replace them with divine control – this is what the Kingdom of God is all about. And the Jewish nation is destined to play a vital part in the events of the Last Days.

Many times the Old Testament prophets described the events that would bring their Messiah to Jerusalem and always their vision was that he would come to rescue the nation from dire calamity and near destruction. They predicted that Israel’s return to the land would be at a time of difficulty and distress – Ezekiel said this:

*“As a shepherd seeks out his flock when he is among his sheep that have been scattered, so will I seek out my sheep, and I will rescue them from all places where they have been scattered **on a day of clouds and thick darkness.** And I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land” (Ezekiel 34:12,13).*

Back in the land they were destined to be surrounded by enemies, including some who would be plotting their annihilation:

⁵ Note how similar this expression is to that used by the apostle Paul in Romans 11:25-26, when he explained about the time when “the fullness of the Gentiles has come in”.

*“Thus says the LORD God: **Because the enemy said of you, ‘Aha!’ and, ‘The ancient heights have become our possession,’** therefore prophesy, and say, Thus says the LORD God: Precisely because they made you desolate and crushed you from all sides, so that you became the possession of the rest of the nations, and you became the talk and evil gossip of the people, therefore, O mountains of Israel, hear the word of the LORD God ... Therefore thus says the LORD God: I swear that **the nations that are all around you shall themselves suffer reproach**” (36:3-7);*

*“For behold, days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will restore the fortunes of my people, Israel and Judah, says the LORD, and I will bring them back to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall take possession of it ... **Alas! That day is so great there is none like it; it is a time of distress for Jacob; yet he shall be saved out of it.** And it shall come to pass in that day, declares the LORD of hosts, that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and I will burst your bonds, and foreigners shall no more make a servant of him. But they shall serve the LORD their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them” (Jeremiah 30:3-9).*

❖ Jerusalem under Siege

There are detailed prophecies which describe the build-up to the arrival of Israel’s Messiah. One common feature is that many nations are aligned against the Jews and are intent upon their overthrow. This would have seemed unimaginable only a few years ago. Now there is a political precedent for a confederacy of nations invading the sovereign territory of another nation to bring “peace and stability”; to remove terrorism; to disarm a nation which is thought to hold weapons of mass destruction; or to replace an undesirable regime. Invasions of Afghanistan, the Balkans, Iraq and suchlike have made it more likely that international action as described by the prophets could occur soon.

Israel’s political and military decisions, often made regardless of international political opinion, may well provoke international military action. And strong-minded nations around, aggravated by Israeli attitudes and actions,

will take action, as they have done before,⁶ if they see a suitable opportunity and reckon they can succeed.

The prophecies that tell of these terrible events, and of an eventual happy outcome, are not given so that we can work out just how and when all this will occur. If we knew this, we might relax and put off any decision about following Jesus until nearer the time – that’s human nature! You should read the prophecies in Ezekiel chapters 38 and 39; Joel chapter 3 and Zechariah chapters 12-14 and note the common themes:

- ✧ Nations confederate against the nation of Israel;
- ✧ Military action being launched;
- ✧ Israel in grave distress and the nation at the point of extinction;
- ✧ The Lord Jesus Christ coming to rescue them;
- ✧ Their acceptance of him as their Messiah and king.

The prophet Zechariah is quite specific about the outcome, for he says this about the time when the nation of Israel at last encounters its redeemer:

*“On that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, **when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn**” (Zechariah 12:9,10).*

Israel will at last recognise Jesus as their king – the one who was pierced when he was nailed to the cross – and they will then be in a position to make a new agreement with God, by faith in Jesus Christ. The prophet indicates that there will be baptisms again in Jerusalem, as at the time of the apostles, whereupon the nation will come once

⁶ There have been wars between Israel and her Arab neighbours in 1948, 1967 and 1973 and the Palestinian “intifada” or uprising which began in 1987. The hatred that exists between Israel and her Arab neighbours goes right back to Bible times and is there described as a “perpetual enmity” (Ezekiel 35:5).

more into covenant relationship with God.⁷ For this is what Zechariah says:

*“On that day **there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.** And on that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, so that they shall be remembered no more. And also I will remove from the land the prophets and the spirit of uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1,2).*

The prophet also identifies the place to which Jesus will come to rule as king:

*“Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. **On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives** that lies before Jerusalem on the east ... **And the LORD will be king over all the earth.** On that day the LORD will be one and his name one” (Zechariah 14:1-9).*

❖ When will it Happen?

It was outside Jerusalem – the city from which the coming king is going to reign – that the apostles asked Jesus whether he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel there and then. Jesus told them something important about the timing of all this:

*“**It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:7,8).*

⁷ This is what the apostle Paul also said would happen: “In the very place where it was said to them, ‘You are not my people,’ there they will be called ‘sons of the living God’ ” (Romans 9:26).

They were right as far as their expectations were concerned, but they were not to know the timing and neither are we to know. Instead, we are to keep spiritually awake and alert to watch what is happening in the world. And we should continue to talk to people about what all this means, and what God is still offering them. It is a matter of being prepared and keeping active, because we do not know precisely when Jesus will come. When he was living on earth, not even Jesus knew when he was to return as king. This is what Jesus said:

“Concerning that day or that hour, no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard, keep awake. For you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to stay awake. Therefore **stay awake** – for **you do not know when the master of the house will come**, in the evening, or at midnight, or when the cock crows, or in the morning – lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: **Stay awake**” (Mark 13:32-37).

Even when Jesus gave a detailed exposition of things that were to come to pass, and described the confrontation between the combined forces of the earth and the powers of heaven – the battle of Armageddon – he gave this important aside:

*“I saw, coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs. For they are demonic spirits, performing signs, who go abroad to the kings of the whole world, to assemble them for battle on the great day of God the Almighty. (**Behold, I am coming like a thief! Blessed is the one who stays awake, keeping his garments on, that he may not go about naked and be seen exposed!**)”* And they assembled them at the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon. The seventh angel poured out his bowl into the air, and a loud voice came out of the temple, from the throne, saying, ‘It is done!’” (Revelation 16:13-17).

❖ Being Prepared

Imagine what it would be like if we had become so fascinated by world events and so determined to work out when Jesus will come that we were unprepared for that coming! Nobody knows when their life will end – it’s one of the challenges of life to try to do everything that we know we should do while there is still time. The New Testament has a lot to say about the Kingdom of God but its main emphasis is on the qualities needed if we are to become citizens of the Kingdom.⁸ Jesus taught that we should:

- *Be born again, of water and the Spirit (John 3:5);*
- *Become like little children if we want to enter the Kingdom of God (Matthew 18:3; Luke 18:17);*
- *Grow up to be fruitful and productive to the glory of God (Matthew 13:23);*
- *Make the kingdom our absolute priority in life (Matthew 6:33; 13:44);*
- *Pray for its coming (Matthew 6:9,10);*
- *Be spiritually prepared for the coming of the bridegroom, and keep awake! (Matthew 25:1-13);*
- *Realise that however hard we try, entry into the kingdom will still be God’s gracious gift to us (Matthew 25:34).⁹*

If we want a new life in God’s kingdom we have to start living differently now; it’s no good waiting until the coming of Jesus in the hope that it will all come right when he returns – it won’t. Life in the Kingdom of God is going to be so different to our present experience that any hardship or difficulty we face now will prove to be completely worthwhile. Paul was having a tough life himself, though you wouldn’t know that from Romans; but he reckoned it all worthwhile when weighed in the balances alongside what is

⁸ The apostle Paul makes a similar comment later in Romans when he says that: “The kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (14:17). Notice that he is saying there’s more to life than “eating and drinking”, which many forgot in the days of Noah and Lot!

⁹ It has been one of Paul’s key themes that we cannot be justified by works but by faith (by the things that we believe).

to be the final outcome.¹⁰ This is the same for all of us – the joys of the kingdom will far outweigh any hardships we may suffer now as disciples of the Lord.

❖ International Opposition

When God's chosen king reigns on earth he will transform the world and make it a fit place in which to live. So you would expect everybody to welcome the coming of Jesus with open arms. But they won't and we have to be prepared for that too. The Scriptures tell us that the nations of the world will challenge his right to rule and will oppose his authority. The Psalmist foresaw this when he penned these words:

“Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his anointed, saying, ‘Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.’ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the LORD holds them in derision. Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ‘As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.’ I will tell of the decree: The LORD said to me, ‘You are my Son; today I have begotten you. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession’” (Psalm 2:1-8).

Can you imagine it? At last a king comes, a ruler for whom many people have been longing, one who will bring peace, righteousness, justice, security, abundant fruitfulness, excellent healthcare for all, prolonged life, restored moral values, united worship of the one true God, and true happiness for all mankind.¹¹ Yet the ruling powers resent his arrival and challenge his authority! Put like that, it does seem a likely, if sad, outcome. For most people take a self-centred view about life and what matters to many is the loss of position, status or personal influence. Such people will oppose Christ when he comes to reign on earth, which is why Daniel's explanation of the dream indicated that the stone power will achieve its objective in two stages:

¹⁰ See 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 and Romans 11:33-36.

¹¹ We looked at life in God's Kingdom in Chapter 20.

1 It will destroy all existing kingdoms and powers and remove all traces of their existence and influence (Daniel 2:44; Revelation 11:15-18);

2 The stone will grow into a mountain to fill the earth – the king will increase his authority and control step-by-step, to result in a thousand-year rule over all the earth (Daniel 2:35; Revelation 20:1-6).¹²



❖ Jesus in Jerusalem

All sorts of changes are due to take place in Jerusalem when Jesus returns and they are described in some detail in various prophecies. The city is to be the centre of world government from whence the law of God will be issued, and the rulers of the earth will come there, sooner or later, to acknowledge the new ruler of the world. The prophets say this about Jerusalem:

*“For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the LORD will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. And **nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising** ... Your gates shall be open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that **people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession**. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste” (Isaiah 60:2-3, 11-12);*

*“At that time Jerusalem shall be called the throne of the LORD, and **all nations shall gather to it, to the presence of the LORD in Jerusalem**, and they shall no more stubbornly follow their own evil heart. In those days the house of Judah shall join the house of Israel, and together they shall come from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers for a heritage” (Jeremiah 3:17, 18).*

¹² This one thousand year period is called “The Millennium”, though that actual word does not appear in the Scriptures.

It is clear that the Jewish people will have a special function in this new age of the world. They are destined to fulfil their original calling and become God's ambassadors to the nations:

*“Thus says the LORD of hosts: Peoples shall yet come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the favour of the LORD and to seek the LORD of hosts; I myself am going.’ Many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favour of the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts: **In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you’**” (Zechariah 8:20-23).*

❖ Centre of True Worship

It is clear from these prophecies that people from many nations will want to come to Jerusalem because it will be the centre of divine worship in the age to come. Nowadays there are many different gods being worshipped and many different ways of worshipping them. But when King Jesus reigns there will be only one way of worshipping God acceptably. We looked earlier at Zechariah's prophecy about the king coming to Jerusalem to rule over all the earth and the very same chapter continues like this:

“Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths” (Zechariah 14:16-18).

Here is another indication that the king's influence will gradually increase and that there will be some on-going resistance for a time. But it is also clear that Jerusalem is to be a place of public religious worship, a place where

feasts are to be kept to the LORD as they were many generations ago. Other prophets tell of the erection of a magnificent temple and the reintroduction of sacrifices.¹³

These changes will serve the purpose of helping the mortal inhabitants of the kingdom learn about sin and its awful consequences, and to help them look back in time and understand more about the great redeeming sacrifice accomplished by the Lord Jesus Christ. His sacrifice for sins was “once for all” (Hebrews 7:27; 9:26; 10:10) and will never be repeated.

But when the 1000 year reign of Christ has come it will be much harder for the inhabitants of the earth to remember how brutal and cruel things used to be, and what Jesus suffered in order to overcome sin. So their appreciation of what Jesus did will lapse as life becomes so pleasant and people and animals live in such harmony and at peace. An occasional visit to the Jerusalem temple as a learning experience will sharpen their appreciation and cause them to rejoice at the great salvation of God. And the Jews will be the priests at that venue, thus to fulfil their age-old destiny. They will be God's “treasured possession among all peoples ... and you shall be to me **a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**” (Exodus 19:5,6).

❖ Mortal and Immortal

Those who have been already to the Judgement Seat of Christ, at the start of the Millennium – the 1000 year reign of the King – and who have been made immortal will have the responsibility of teaching and guiding the mortal population. They will become rulers and advisers and the indications are that they will have particular powers and insights that will make that role very effective indeed.

*“For a people shall dwell in Zion, in Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry. **As soon as he hears it, he answers you.** And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet **your Teacher will not hide himself anymore, but your eyes shall see your Teacher. And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’**”*

¹³ It may seem strange to think of animal sacrifices being reinstated as a teaching aid, but the prophecies are quite clear about this. See, for example, Ezekiel 43:18-27; Isaiah 60:6-7 or Hosea 3:4-5.

when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left. Then you will defile your carved idols overlaid with silver and your gold-plated metal images. You will scatter them as unclean things. You will say to them, “Be gone!” (Isaiah 30:19-22).¹⁴

In this way the mortal nations of the kingdom age will learn righteousness and will come to understand more and more about the ways of God. Laws against immorality and wrongdoing will be enforced and people will have no alternative but to live in an obedient and law-abiding way, to the advantage of all. But what chance will there be for these mortals to become immortal themselves? We are told, in graphic picture language, that sin will be restrained for the duration of the Millennium but that, at the end of that period, the restraint will be removed. The detail comes in the last book of the Bible, the Revelation of Jesus Christ:

*“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, **until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while**” (Revelation 20:1-3).*

We have not yet considered Bible teaching about the Devil and Satan, because Paul has made no mention of the subject whatsoever in his Letter to the Romans. But in this passage the forces which deceive mankind are said to be restrained for 1000 years, after which they are released once more. The result of ungodliness being allowed to express itself once more will be that a division will occur between those who want to rebel against God and those who want to have eternal life under the rulership of Christ. Here’s the picture language of Revelation again:

“And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be

¹⁴ The translators of this Version of the Bible have understood the prophet to be speaking about the coming again of Jesus (the Teacher). Other versions omit the capital letter, showing that those translators understood that it will be the work of immortal saints in different localities to act as teachers to a particular community.

*released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. **And they marched up over the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulphur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.** Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done” (20:7-12).*

❖ Second Resurrection

At the end of the Millennium there is therefore to be another resurrection – this time of those who have died during the thousand years; and another judgement of those still living and those who died during the Millennium who have now been raised. This will give a final opportunity for the mortal population to become immortal. Those who oppose the rulership of Christ will have shown that they prefer something else; those who have come to appreciate the gracious gift of God will now receive the privilege of living forever in a right relationship to God.

This is what Scripture says about that time – the beginning of that age of eternity when the immortal inhabitants of planet earth live in perfect harmony because of the work of God in Christ:

*“**Then comes the end, when he** (the Lord Jesus Christ) **delivers the kingdom to God the Father** after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For ‘God has put all things in subjection under his feet.’ But when it says, ‘all things are put in subjection,’ it is plain that he is excepted who put all things in subjection under him. When all things are subjected to him, then the Son*

himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that **God may be all in all**" (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Quite what it means that God will "be all in all" remains to be seen. One version, which amplifies each verse to offer a range of possible meanings, says:

*"When everything is subjected to him, then the Son himself will also subject himself to [the Father] who put all things under Him, so that God may be all in all [be everything to everyone, supreme, the indwelling and controlling factor of life]."*¹⁵

God means to fill the earth with His glory, and that means filling it with men and women who share His image, reflect His character, and think and behave in a truly godly way. When everything has been made subject to God's supreme will, His will and purpose will be the indwelling and controlling factor of life. God will then be "all in all". As God was manifested, or made known, in the way that Jesus lived on earth, so He will be manifested in all those men and women who live in the new-made world.¹⁶

At last the end of mortal existence will have come. It will be the time when the earth is restored to perfection and all who live on it will be made immortal. All creation will then resound in praise to Almighty God. He has created all things for His glory and at last mankind will reflect the divine image. The time will have come which the apostle Paul described in these words:

"The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God" (Romans 8:19-21).

¹⁵ The Amplified Bible.

¹⁶ See 1 Timothy 3:16 and 1 John 1:1-2. When Jesus lived on earth, God was manifest, or displayed, to mankind through His Son.

Things to Read

- 📖 Zechariah chapters 12 to 14 give a dramatic portrayal of the events of the last days, including the repentance of Israel and the invasion of Jerusalem. The prophecy is not in chronological order, so you cannot work out the precise sequence of events, but all the elements are there which will feature prominently in the final countdown to the coming of Christ.
- 📖 Revelation chapter 20 gives a different sort of picture of these events, using Scriptural symbols to show, for example, how all forms of sin will be restrained when the kingdom is established.

Questions to Think About

- 22.1 Joel chapter 3 describes the judgement of nations by a coming king. Read it and then answer the following questions:
- a Where is this judgement due to take place?
 - b Why is God angry with the nations?
 - c What is due to happen to the children of Israel (the Jews)?
 - d Where is the Judge said to be residing?
 - e What is the predicted future for Jerusalem?
- 22.2 Isaiah chapter 65 verses 17 to 25 describes the coming kingdom as "a new heavens and earth", or a new society which will be established. What especial blessings and benefits does the prophet foresee? Would you like to be part of this?



"As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have begotten you'" (Psalm 2:6, 7)