

12. THE MESSIAH'S ENTHRONEMENT

Daniel had a vision of someone like a man, coming with the clouds of heaven. When he arrived, he was presented to the Ancient of Days who gave him authority, glory, and kingship, and all the nations subjected themselves to him (Dan 7:13-14). When and where did this amazing meeting take place?

In Psalm 2, God said he had installed his king on Zion, his holy mountain. He said to him: You are my son, *today* I have begotten you. Ask me, and I'll give the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the Earth as your possession. We should understand *begotten* in this context as formally installing a king into theocratic rights (Brown, Driver & Briggs) and *the ends of the Earth* as the entire world. The recipient is Jesus the Messiah, God's regent on Earth.

Sit at my right hand, the Lord said to the Messiah, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet. I'll extend your mighty scepter and you'll rule over your enemies from Zion (Ps 110). When did this installation take place. What else do we know about this 'today'?

These amazing prophecies were made hundreds of years before Jesus was born. After about thirty-seven years of living in humble circumstances, the exaltation of Christ began with his resurrection, followed by his enthronement in heaven at the Father's right hand. Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended physically to heaven in the presence of his disciples whom he commissioned to make disciples of all nations. As heir of the kingdom that God will establish on Earth, he sent his small band of disciples out to continue his work of building his Church, made up of people from every tribe and language who would rule with him as his monarchy during the millennium. Jesus is presently waiting in heaven for the calling out of his Church to be completed and for the time when God will make his enemies a footstool for his feet (Heb 10:13).

At his return to Earth in power and glory, he'll resurrect and rapture his Church and be glorified in them as his bride and monarchy who

will reign with him. He'll defeat his enemies at Armageddon and begin his reign over the Earth.

This increase in rank and power is best understood as occurring in ten events:

1. His **resurrection** from the dead on the third day after his crucifixion (Mt 28:6, 1 Cor 15:20, Rev 1:5).
2. His **ascension** to heaven (Lk 24:50-51, Acts 1:9-11)
3. His **enthronement** in heaven at the Father's right hand (Ps 2:7-9, 110:1, Dan 7:14, Mt 28:18, Jn 3:35, 5:22, 17:2, Eph 1:19b-21, Php 2:9-10, Heb 2:9, Rev 5:6).
4. His time of **waiting** in heaven (Acts 3:21, Heb 10:13)
5. His **return** to Earth in power and glory (Mk 13:26-27, Lk 21:27-28, 1 Thess 4:14-17, 2 Thess 1:7b).
6. His **descent to Israel** (Mt 24:30, Zech 14:3-4, Rev 1:7)
7. His enthronement on David's throne on Mount Zion, where he'll live among Israel forever (Ezek 43:4-7a).
8. His **enthronement in New Jerusalem** Mt 16:27, 19:28, Rev 11:15-17, 19:6).
9. His **glorification** in the saints in New Jerusalem (2 Thess 1:10, Jn 17:10, Rev 21:2, 9-11, 22:3-4).
10. His 1000-year **reign** (Zech 14:9, 16, Rom 14:11, 1 Cor 15:25, Rev 20:4-6).

Then comes the end of his **regency** (1 Cor 15:24-25, 28).

It is important to understand that Jesus is enthroned twice, once in heaven and once on Earth. After his resurrection and ascension, he sat down on his Father's throne. This was because Jesus is one with the Father and he is sovereign over the universe as God is. But Jesus will be enthroned a second time. He told the church in Laodicea: To the victorious one I'll give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat down with my Father on his throne.

In Psalm 8 we read that man was made ruler over all of God's creation, he put everything under their feet. This Psalm is quoted in Hebrews 2 and then the author says Jesus shared in our humanity so

that by his death he might break the devil's power. Because of the Fall, man's governance of the Earth has been tragic, characterized by warfare, corruption, pride, and greed. God's plan to rectify the situation was to send his only Son into the world to save it, or at least those who believed in him. He died for the sins of mankind and was brought back to life on the third day and after forty days he ascended to heaven, where he resumed his role as lord of the universe. But the Earth is still under the control of sinful man and ultimately Satan (1 Jn 5:19). Jesus is waiting for the right time to return and take control of the Earth, but first he is building his community, the Church, who will be the sole survivors of humanity and who will reign with him forever.

When Jesus returns, he'll be enthroned on Mount Zion, from where he'll be king over the whole Earth (Zech 14:9). This enthronement is different from his sovereignty over the universe that he shares with the Father. He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet, including rebellious mankind, Satan, and death. His throne on Earth is called the throne of David, an early founder of the kingdom of Israel. It is an earthly throne and always closely connected with God's temple in Jerusalem. Without God's temple, there can be no throne of David. God is ruling on this throne through his regent.

Ezekiel had a vision of the Messiah returning to Jerusalem, entering the temple, and declaring that this would be his throne and the place where he would live among Israel for as long as the Earth existed. His reign would begin when the seventh trumpet was blown, which is simultaneous with Jesus' return to Earth (Rev 11:15-17). The kingdoms of the world, the totality of world government, will become the kingdom of the Messiah, and he'll rule the nations forever. The elders declare that he has taken up his great power and begun to reign. He'll rule the nations, judge the dead, and reward the saints. Their reward is to possess the sovereignty, power, and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven, the kingdom that God prepared for them since the creation of the world, the original stewardship man was entrusted with. When Jesus is king over the Earth, every knee will bow to him and every tongue will acknowledge him as God. At the end of the 1000 years, the Messiah will hand the kingdom to God the Father, and he himself will be made subject to him, so that God may be all in all.

1. Christ's resurrection from the dead

God raised Christ from the dead. Not only did he come back to life after being dead but he rose from the dead in an immortal, supernatural body. Christ was the first person to have a resurrection body. When he returns to Earth, those who belong to him will be resurrected and raptured with similar bodies that are glorious, powerful, and spiritual; that is, they are filled with God's Spirit. Jesus' appearances on Earth for forty days after his resurrection illustrate how these bodies are capable of normal human activities and how the resurrected can disappear and reappear at will. Just as believers have born the image of the earthly man, so they'll bear the image of the heavenly man. Paul states that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, which proves that the kingdom has not yet been inaugurated. We are presently only heirs of the kingdom and co-heirs with Christ. There is presently no kingdom of God here on Earth; no king, no territory, no subjects, no monarchy. That is still to come. Resurrection bodies will enable Christ and his people to live in both physical and spiritual environments. It is an exalted mode of life.

2. Christ's Ascension to Heaven

Forty days after his resurrection, Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives in the presence of his disciples. He rose from the Earth until a cloud hid him from their eyes. Two angels told them that Jesus would come back in the same way they had seen him going into heaven. He'll also return to the same place, the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4), and then he'll become king of the whole Earth (Zech 14:9) and nations will go up year after year to worship him (Zech 14:16).

3. Christ's enthronement in heaven

Arriving in heaven, the Father told Jesus to sit at his right hand until he made his enemies a footstool for his feet (Ps 110:1). God seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realm, where he exercises sovereignty far above all rule and authority and power and dominion (Eph 1:20-21). This is where Jesus is now, reigning as God together with the Father. Their present reign is in the spiritual realm; it is not the Messianic reign, or the kingdom of God that Jesus spoke so much about. We should remember from Genesis 1 that the Earth is not under

God's direct rule, he entrusted it into the hands of mankind (Gen 1:28, Ps 8:4-8, Heb 2:6-8). David continues: The Lord (Messiah) is at your right hand, he'll crush kings on the day of his wrath. *He'll judge the nations*, heaping up the dead and crushing the rulers of the whole Earth (Ps 110:5-6). These events will occur at the beginning of the millennium, during the Messiah's next great visitation on Earth.

Shortly before his ascension to heaven, Jesus gave his disciples the Great Commission saying: All authority in heaven and Earth has been given to me, therefore go and make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18). Jesus had already told them he would build his Church and the gates of Hades would not overcome it. This was his great purpose, and it is now his disciples' responsibility to preach the gospel to all peoples, tribes, language groups, and nations. How did Jesus know that all authority had been given to him? He had read Daniel's prophecy about the Son of Man (Dan 7:13-14) whom he regularly claimed to be. All nations were not worshiping him at that time, but one day they would be, after the gospel of the kingdom will have been preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations. During the millennium, all nations will come to Jerusalem to bow the knee to the king (Zech 14:16, Phil 2:9-11).

4. Christ's 2000-year wait in heaven

Jesus' enthronement in heaven is necessary because he is God the Son, but it is not the climax of his exaltation. He is waiting there for his enemies to be made his footstool before he descends to Earth to rule it directly. Preaching in Jerusalem, Peter told his fellow Israelites that God would send the appointed Messiah, even Jesus, but heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything. Sitting on the throne in heaven he waits until that time when his enemies will be made his footstool (Heb 10:13), the time for him to defeat the Antichrist and the final world kingdom and establish his kingdom. That is in the days of the kings of the fourth kingdom (Dan 2:44).

The installation of the Son of Man as God's regent on Earth is an important event in the parable of the minas (Lk 19:11-27) that Jesus told. The crowds thought the kingdom of God was imminent, and Jesus told the parable to warn them that it would take some time and that his followers should faithfully serve him while he was away. Referring to himself, he said a certain man of noble birth went to a

distant country to have himself appointed king, and then to return. When he returned, he called his servants to account, rewarding those who had done well and punishing those who didn't. The nobleman is Jesus, his servants are his followers, and his return was not imminent, it is now approaching 2000 years since his ascension.

5. Christ's Return to Earth in Power and Glory

Daniel saw a vision of a son of man coming with the clouds (7:13), what Jesus called 'the sign of the Son of Man in the sky' (Mt 24:30). The surrounding context in Daniel refers to the Antichrist at the end of the age (7:8, 11, 20-21, 24-26). The Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He'll return physically, just as his disciples saw him ascending to heaven. He'll bring with him the spirits of those who died in union with him, and their bodies will be resurrected from their graves. At the same time, the living saints will be raptured and meet the Lord in the air. Expressed differently by John, the heavenly Jerusalem will descend from heaven to the Earth's atmosphere, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. The bride, now resurrected and raptured, meets the Lord in the air in their heavenly home, New Jerusalem. A great multitude cries out: Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty *has begun to reign*. The wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride, the queen, has made herself ready. They'll reign together.

6. Christ's descent to Israel

Jesus' return to Earth is taught frequently throughout the NT but not much is said about his destination. The Jews expected the Messiah to return to Jerusalem, or more specifically the temple on Mount Zion, and this was prophesied by Zechariah:

Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from East to West forming a great valley (14:3-4).

From there, Ezekiel tells us, his glory will enter the temple via the east gate (Ezek 43:4-5). This agrees with the angel's words in Acts 1:11: This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

The Messiah is coming back to be king of Israel. Ezekiel said: My servant David will be their king, and they'll all have one shepherd ...

they'll live in the land I gave to my servant Jacob, the land where their ancestors lived. They and their children and their grandchildren will live there for, and my servant David will be their king forever. ... My temple will be among them forever. My dwelling place will be among them and I'll be their God and they'll be my people. When my temple is among them forever, then the nations will know that I the Lord make Israel holy (Ezek 37:24-28).

7. Christ's glorification among his saints

Then there is the Church who at this time is being persecuted by the Antichrist. Jesus' first priority, when he returns, is to save his people. He'll remove them from the world by resurrection and rapture. They'll meet him in the air and from that moment on, they'll always be with the Lord. Their new home is New Jerusalem which descends from heaven. On that day, the Messiah will be glorified in his saints and marvelled at among all who have believed. Glory comes to Jesus through them (Jn 17:10). He has created a new humanity in himself, a community that is glorified, sinless, loving, and immortal, who will reign with him forever

8. Christ's Enthronement on Earth

What happens after Jesus returns to Earth? Zechariah clearly states that on the day of the Lord, his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, East of Jerusalem, and the mountain will be split in two from East to West. In a vision of the same event, Ezekiel saw the glory of the God of Israel coming from the East. His voice sounded like the roar of rushing waters, and the land was lit up with his glory. The glory of the Lord entered the temple through the gate facing East and his glory filled the temple

- Ezek 43:4-7 The Messiah's throne on Earth is in the temple
- Mat 19:28 he'll sit on his throne at the renewal of all things
- Rev 11:15-17 he begins his reign after the 7th trumpet
- Rev 19:6-7 he'll be united to his bride in New Jerusalem

God's throne in heaven is to be distinguished from the throne of David of which the angel Gabriel spoke to Mary saying: The Lord God will give your son Jesus the throne of his ancestor David, and he'll reign over Jacob's descendants forever, his kingdom will never end. This is the kingdom of God of which Jesus continually spoke; the Messiah's kingdom with his throne in the temple at Jerusalem.

Jesus said that at the renewal of all things, he would sit on his glorious throne and his disciples would also sit on thrones and judge Israel (Mt 19:28). Where is this glorious throne? Ezekiel had an extensive vision (40 – 48) where he was taken to a mountain in Israel on the south side of which there was a city and on top of it was a temple. He heard the Messiah speaking to him from within the temple saying: Son of man, this is the place of my throne, this is my footstool. This is where I'll live among Israel forever. This is the Messiah's glorious throne in the temple on Mount Zion. He'll be surrounded by his people Israel and the nations will make regular pilgrimages there to worship him and bring their offerings.

The Messiah will live among Israel forever, which means as long as the world exists. His presence is evidenced by the glory that emanates from the temple and lights up the sky above to such an extent that the city does not need light of the sun or the moon (Isa 60:19).

The Messiah has another much larger community in the heavenly realm, in a city called New Jerusalem. The throne of God and the Lamb is there, the throne is there and his resurrected community from every tribe and nation serve him and see his face. This heavenly city gives its glory to earthly Jerusalem. It is described symbolically because it is in the heavenly realm (Rev 21:2 – 22:5).

This is a similar situation to the days of Israel's monarchy, when God's throne was in heaven but his presence was seen in the temple on Mt Zion (1 Kgs 8:10-11). But now God is living among his people Israel, because the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22) has come down to Earth, albeit in the heavenly realm (Rev 21:9-10) but permeating the physical realm on Mount Zion in Israel. No one can deny that the Messiah is living in Jerusalem during the millennium. The nations will come to Zion's light and kings to the brightness of its dawn (Isa 60:19). The nations will walk by its light, and the Earth's kings will bring their splendor to it (Rev 21:24).

9. Christ's 1000-year reign

The Lord will be king over the whole Earth and he alone will be worshiped. He'll strike down the nations at Armageddon with a sharp sword, and he'll rule the survivors with an iron scepter. The saints will reign with Christ for 1000 years (Rev 20). The throne of God and the Lamb will be in the city (New Jerusalem) and his servants will serve him and they'll reign forever and ever. The Earth is not eternal, so any

reference to reigning on Earth forever means while the Earth exists. Christ will reign until all enemies are subdued, including death, after which he'll hand over his kingship to God the Father. He is never depicted as being visible on Earth during this long reign and neither are the saints.

At the sounding of the seventh trumpet in Revelation, the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of the Lord and his Messiah and he'll reign forever. The Messiah does not reign alone. All believers, in their Spirit-filled resurrection bodies, are clothed in fine linen, bright and clean, which stands for the righteous acts of God's people. The Messiah has returned to be glorified by his saints and to be admired by all his believers. They are united to their Lord and share his authority. Daniel 7:13-14 is about the Messiah, and verses 15-27 are about the saints of the Most High, better translated as the saints of the high places or the saints of the heavenly realm (compare Eph 1:3, 2:6). It is they who receive the kingdom and possess it forever. The kingship, authority, and greatness of all the world's kingdoms will be given to the saints of the high places. Their kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will serve and obey them. The saints' role during the millennium is to eat and drink at the king's table, reign over the Earth, judge the nations and angels, and be in charge of all the Messiah's possessions. Our Lord, the King, will oversee everything.

10. The End of Christ's Regency

At the end of the millennium, Satan is cast into hell and the wicked are judged at the Last Judgment. Death and Hades cease to exist as Hades has no inhabitants and only immortal beings remain. As the world has come to an end, the Son relinquishes his kingship to the Father, the one who gave it to him in the first place, so that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-25, 28). It is God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who will be all in all. So the Son, in his submission to the Father, is glorified in the eternal godhead.