

CHRIST'S REIGN ON EARTH

Readings: Psalm 22

LECTURE

The return of Jesus Christ from heaven, his second appearing, is real, bodily and substantial. It is necessitated in order that he might fulfil the declared purpose of God, as it is presented in the scriptures of the prophets and apostles. That purpose required that the person who was to fulfil the office of Messiah, the Anointed One, should be a prophet, a priest and a king.

Clearly, Jesus fulfilled the office of a prophet to the people of Israel at his first coming. He was first and foremost a teacher who taught men and women what God required of them, and what was necessary for them to do if they would be found acceptable to God. As a prophet he also made predictions concerning the Jewish people: their land, their state, their capital city Jerusalem, the Temple, the Jewish people, the persecution of Jesus's followers, and the success of the Gospel he preached, that it would be circulated in all the world. The words he had spoken would never be lost, neither would they pass away. Also, that there would come false Christs and false teachers who would become so influential that the Truth would almost be obscured from view.

He also made the most astonishing prediction made by any prophet: that he would rise again from the dead after his crucifixion in order to prove that what he had predicted was THE Truth! Every one of these predictions were fulfilled, proving that Jesus of Nazareth is what he claimed to be: the Son of God.

Jesus was also a priest, not a priest who served in the Temple, for that was reserved for the sons of Aaron and the tribe of Levi. Jesus was a Jew of the tribe of Judah, but he was a priest of a different and higher order. The Scriptures describe it as being after the order or arrangement of Melchizedek. Unlike the Levitical order, it did not depend on succession: it was not based on who your father was; it could only be conferred by divine decree. It is called a 'royal priesthood'.

In this capacity Jesus made an offering of himself. He was the antitype of the whole burnt offering: he loved God with all his heart, soul, strength and mind. Though he possessed our nature, yet he did no sin; he was therefore without blemish. When he died, he died in obedience, a perfectly righteous man; and because he honoured God in his death, God raised him from the dead and gave

him everlasting life. He ascended to heaven where he continues his role as a priest, after the power of an endless life; who as a mediator between God and man, makes intercession for those who do the will of God.

But the office of the Messiah also requires that Jesus should be a King with specific qualifications.

- 1). He had to be born in the line of David.
- 2). He had to be King of Israel.
- 3). He had to deliver Israel from all their enemies.
- 4). He had to settle them again in the land promised to their ancestors.
- 5). He had to make Jerusalem the place of his throne and government.
- 6). He was required to rebuild a temple in Jerusalem.
- 7). He would restore the true worship of Yahweh the God of Israel.
- 8). He was to establish universal peace and the abolition of war.
- 9). In order to achieve this, he would be required to conquer all nations and bring them into a universal empire.
- 10). He was required to cause the earth to be filled with the knowledge of God, and therefore to abolish all false religion.
- 11). To restore creation to its pristine Edenic state, abolishing sin and death from the earth.
- 12). In order that the kingdom should be delivered up to the Father, and that God Himself should take up residence on the earth amongst all the redeemed sons and daughters of Adam.

It is to fulfil these divine requirements that Jesus must return to the earth. Now the Bible is quite clear in its presentation of the lineage of Jesus of Nazareth, from David the heir-king; who as a youth destroyed Goliath, and united the tribes of Israel into a strong nation with Jerusalem as its capital. Though popular with the ordinary people whom he encountered in the cities, towns and villages of Judea so that multitudes followed him, because of the miracles he performed; Jesus had many enemies among the ruling classes, particularly those associated with the Sadducees and Pharisees, the politico-religious parties of the times.

They refused to accept that Jesus could in any way be the Son of God; but they never challenged the fact that he was a son of David. If they could have proved that, they would have met his claims to be the Messiah with a decisive rejection. But both his parents, Mary and Joseph, were of Davidic descent. Joseph was of the royal line through Solomon; and Mary was descended from

Nathan, the brother of Solomon. Now the promise to David that after his death an illustrious descendent would arise, whose kingdom God would establish for ever, 1 Sam.7:14; also required that God would be his father, and that the seed should be born of a female descendant of David. There was no prohibition of any in the line of David from taking a wife from any tribe; but in the case of Jesus, both parents were from David. Joseph was the adoptive father and Mary his mother, Jesus being born of divine intervention: in what is known as the virgin birth.

Luke describes how Mary was informed by an angel, a messenger from God, that the son she was to bare would be called the Son of the Highest; he would be great, would be given the throne of his father David, would reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his kingdom there would be no end, either of time or extent. However, Jesus never fulfilled these requirements in his lifetime, apart from being acknowledged as the Son of the Highest; a claim which those in authority refused to recognise, and on that account charged him with blasphemy and put him to death.

Nevertheless, the issue arose when he was put on trial and Pilot asked him, *"Are you a king then? And Jesus said, That is so; to this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bare witness to the truth."* Now we know that Pilot wrote a title and put it on the cross: "JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS." The Jews never accepted his claim; but if the scriptures are to be fulfilled, then his return from heaven is necessitated, so how ill these things come about?

The prophecies of the scriptures are very clear. On account of their rejection of their king and the covenant God had given them, the Jews were to be scattered among all the nations. They would suffer terrible discrimination and would become few in number; yet they would never disappear, they would survive as a distinct people. Not only the Jews, but the land would also suffer: it would become desolate under the occupation of many foreign powers, and their ancient city trodden down. Yet neither the Jews, their land nor capital would remain in this situation for ever.

Moses, fourteen centuries earlier, predicted the return of the Jews from their dispersion and exile. The prophets tell us that when the times of the Gentiles had run their course, those days would be marked by the return of the Jews to their land; by the rejuvenation of that land from centuries of desolation;

and Jerusalem would become inhabited by Jews; and it would be enlarged far beyond its historic boundaries, Is.54;2-3.

Though the Jews would return and establish a state, rejuvenate the land, build cities and enlarge Jerusalem, yet they would not be a holy people in the sense God intended, neither would they accept the Messiahship of Jesus. For these things to come to pass, this reborn nation would be required to pass through the furnace of adversity and affliction.

The prophets tell us that the Arab nations would be against them, Ez.35; claiming the ancient high places as their own! They tell us that all nations would be opposed to Israel, and that Jerusalem would be a bone of contention, “a cup of trembling for all nations.” Israel has fought a succession of wars against her neighbours, and yet peace is still not achieved. Israel has had more motions of censure from the U.N. than any other nation.

The majority of nations hold that Israel’s possession of Jerusalem is contrary to International Law: a view incidentally that has been made up as they go along! But none of this will be resolved until the situation described in Daniel 11:40-45, Joel 3, Ezekiel 38 and Revelation 16 come to pass: namely an international coalition of nations will launch an attack on Israel with a view to dismantling and disarming the Jewish State. It is at such a time that Christ will return.

The prophets and the New testament tell us that his first work will be to raise the dead who are responsible to him, and gather those who are alive and responsible to his judgment Seat, which be established in the mountainous desert adjacent to the Red Sea. The righteous, being approved, will be granted eternal life; the wicked will be rejected to suffer the judgments that are to engulf the world at this time.

In the meantime, Israel will be invaded and their people will seek refuge across the Jordan; but many will remain, to engage in a fierce defence of Jerusalem, which will be surrounded by international forces. It is at this time that Christ and his saints, being a divine army having moved swiftly from the south around the Dead Sea and over the Mount of Olives, will intervene; involving a massive earthquake which will throw the multi-national force into total confusion. Ezekiel tells us that every man’s hand shall be against his brother, and only one sixth of this grand army will survive.

Christ will then gather the remnants of the nation together: the defenders of Jerusalem and those who fled across the Jordan. It is then that, as Zechariah

tell us, “...they will look on his whom they have pierced and mourn for him, as for an only son.” As the full truth of their unwarranted opposition is they made plain. But like Joseph and his brothers, the Jews will be reconciled, and “a fountain will be opened for sin and uncleanness”. (Zech. 13:1). The knowledge and understanding of the sacrifice Jesus made on their account will result in their receiving personal and national cleansing from sin.

After this reconciliation of Israel, Ezekiel shows how a great work of reconstruction will take place. Huge numbers of war dead will need to be buried: a process will take seven months, for men will be continually employed for some time in disposing of human remains. Seven years will be engaged in the dismantling and destruction of the weapons of war.

While these necessary events are undertaken, a massive work of reconstruction will take place. Ruined cities will be rebuilt; the desolate land will be tilled and sown; and it shall be said , “The land has become like the garden of Eden.” Ez.36: 33-36.

While this is taking place, what of the rest of the world? It is clear from Rev.16:19 that the nations are not going to be unaffected by this conflict, rather the opposite: “The cities of the nations fell!” Ominous words in these times when cities can be vapourised in seconds. An earthquake of the magnitude described in Ezekiel and Zechariah will have repercussions around the globe, as tsunamis will also have a part to play, with the sea and the waves roaring! So the whole world will be reeling in shock at the enormity of what has occurred.

It is then that the Lord Jesus sends out to the ultimatum recorded in Psalm 2: “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, the Lord has said unto me, ‘You are my Son, this day have I begotten you. Ask of me and I shall give you the nations for your inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for your possession. Be wise now, O your kings! Be warned, you judges of the earth! Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss (or give your allegiance to) the Son, lest he be angry and you perish, when his anger is kindled but a little.”

Christ will bring home to the political elite as never before that it has been their disastrous policies which have brought about the time of trouble; their perceived interest that has brought about their destruction, and the only course open is to cooperate with God’s appointed ruler.

At the same time the 'aionian' (or age lasting), good news will be proclaimed. *"Fear God and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgments is come. Worship Him that made heaven and earth, the sea, and the fountains of water,"* Rev.14:7. To make this proclamation effective, Christ will send out from Jerusalem his representatives, whose work will be to summons those of the seed of Israel who remain in the diaspora to return home. For he is to reign over the whole house of Jacob. In Deut.30, Moses speaks of the time when it will come into the mind of those Jews still scattered amongst the nations, the desire to return to the Lord God of their fathers.

This change of heart requires new reformation to generate it. This will be supplied by emissaries from Jerusalem, the newly converted Jews who have seen their Messiah, assisted no doubt by the immortal brethren of Christ. This campaign will result in a mass movement of Jews from every continent seeking to immigrate to their ancient homeland. Ezekiel indicates that the nations will seek to suppress this movement, but in vain! For God will rule over them with fury poured out; and the result will be that not one Jew, not one Israelite, will be left in the countries of their dispersion: all will return.

These refugees will be brought into encampments in the wilderness south of Israel, to be instructed as to the matters of their new king and government, and the laws of the Kingdom. Not all will willingly submit, because Ezekiel tells us that the rebels will be purged out. But the result will be a willing people who readily accept that Jesus of Nazareth is their Messiah and King.

The nations themselves will be alarmed at the speed of reconstruction in the land, and the massive movement of people aided by the great ships of the Tarshish powers, as Isaiah records in ch.60:9. *"Surely the Isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, to the name of the Lord their God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he has glorified thee."*

Seeing that the whole world order is being changed, the nations will send their representatives to see what is happening in the land of Israel, and they will be astounded at the construction of Jerusalem, and of the great Temple in course of erection, as the Psalmist tells us in ch.48:5. *"They saw it and marvelled, they were troubled and hasted away. Fear took hold of them..."* They will report to their political masters of the new power occurring in the Middle East.

Where will all those immigrants go that are brought in? Well, Israel is not going to occupy the little strip of land it so precariously hold on to now. No! It will occupy all the land from the Nile and the Red Sea, to the Euphrates; and from the East Mediterranean to the farthest sea, the Persian Gulf: a huge swathe of territory, the majority at present largely desert; but which under Christ will be caused to be rejuvenated and “blossom as the rose”. That territory will be divided into 13 strips running parallel east to west, to be allocated to the tribes of Israel: 7 tribes to the north and 5 to the south; with a central portion being allocated to the Messiah. In this portion will be located the Holy Oblation, Jerusalem: a Temple city dedicated to the worship of the One True God.

Yes, but what about the other people, the non-Israelites? The Bible tells us that all the modern religions are wrong: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Each has some things right, but all will need to be brought to the understanding of the One true religion; and it will be demonstrated unequivocally as Jeremiah 12:16 tells us. If those non-Israelites *“learn the ways of God’s people now reformed, so that they acknowledge ‘the Lord lives’ then shall they be built in the midst of God’s people.”* They will become adopted Israelites. Ezekiel declares, 47:23, “In whatsoever tribe those people are found, they will be given an inheritance” so they will be accepted on the same basis.

What will develop in a period of about 50 years will be a new nation state: a Kingdom with Jerusalem as its capital. Christ the son of David will be its King, who will have restored the tribes of Israel and settled them in the land promised to Abraham. He will have delivered them from all their enemies, and made Jerusalem the capital of Israel and the seat of government; the place of his throne. He will have caused to be erected a Temple which will be the centre of universal worship.

All these things will be seen and known. Some nations will seek to be allied to this emerging power, but the Bible shows us that there will be great opposition from the largest politico-religious bloc of all. These nations which embrace Catholicism will have developed into a great commercial, military and religious union. It is the system described as “a Scarlet coloured Beast” in Revelation 17. Guided by the commands of the Vatican, the home of the False Prophet, these nations will refuse to submit to Christ, declaring him to be the Antichrist. They will declare war upon what it sees as a Jewish enterprise.

But Christ will not wait for a second invasion of the Middle East. He will transfer the war to the territory of the Beast; and so obstinate will be the opposition, and so great the wrath of the Lamb, that those lands in which thousands of Bible believing Christians were slaughtered, and millions of Jews perished, will be transformed into a lake of fire: a symbolic description of a territory consumed by total war, in which the greatest system of organised deception will finally be erased for ever.

This last gasp of the old order being accomplished, Christ will have fulfilled Paul's prediction "*taking vengeance on them that know not God, punishing with everlasting destruction those that obey not the Gospel,*" 2 Thes.1:9. And all remaining pockets of resistance will be eliminated. There will follow a triumphant entry into the newly erected Temple in Jerusalem. Ezekiel describes in chapter 43 how Christ and the Saints – the 'He who will be' and the 'mighty ones of Israel' – will come from the way of the East. The earth shines with His glory, the whole procession enters into the inner court, and the glory of Yahweh in all its brightness fills the House.

Why is this Temple so necessary an element of the Kingdom of God? Because in the kingdom only one God and one religion will be acknowledged. It will be, as Jesus described, "*a house of prayer for all nations.*" It will also be the centre of a new world-wide administration, as Isaiah relates: "*Out of Zion will go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.*" It will also be the Supreme Court, Psalm 122:5, "*There are set the thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.*" You will recall the promise Jesus gave to his disciples: "*You which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit on his throne of glory, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*"

The Temple will also have its associated rituals: a modified form of those described in the Law of Moses, which will involve animal sacrifices. Why so? Because in the Kingdom with the absence of war, people will in time forget the violence and horror of the past. Even as youngsters today have no idea of the sufferings of only a generation ago. But those sacrifices in the future will be a graphic reminder that sin brings death: a visible memorial of the sacrifice Christ made in the days of his flesh.

The Temple will be a place of universal pilgrimage something like the Haj. Where "all nations will go up from year to year to worship the king, the Lord of

Hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles,” Zech. 14. These obligatory feasts will be of great benefit to people. They will afford times of pleasurable rest from labour, opportunities to share fellowship with new friends and old acquaintances, free from the restraints of time and cost, occasions to meet with and see the ‘immortal’ rulers and learn of their experiences. To unite also in the unalloyed worship of the Creator who has kept His word and realised His plan.

There will of course be a need for an administrative network that will bring law and order, peace and tranquillity to a world that has suffered from the ravages of sin for far too long. People have become simple cogs in an economic machine; they have been subjected to labour to support greedy and oppressive rulers and bosses. When they have organised themselves into unions, these leaders have become barons seeking their own political power. And when war threatens, it is the ordinary people who are drafted into the war machine and slaughtered like cattle.

They have been deceived and lied to time after time, but under Christ Isaiah tells us, “*Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore*”! With the freeing up of resources, think how much less time will be needed to labour, simply for a roof over your head.

Under Christ however, there will be a vast untapped resource of wisdom, understanding, guidance and help. There will be hundreds and thousands of the tried and tested friends of Jesus from all nations, who, because they have been granted immortality, will be able to automatically tap into the divine fount of wisdom like the Lord Jesus. Because they themselves in the days of their flesh have suffered temptation, they will be able to help those who are tempted; as they were weak and erring individuals themselves, they will have compassion on the ignorant and those who fail.

These would have been drawn out of all nations, cultures, peoples and languages: a truly international community who will be given the task of bringing the rule of law and order and genuine assistance to every town and city and region in the world. Psalm 72 tells us that “*he will deliver the needy, help the poor and redeem their lives from deceit and violence. Precious will their life be in the sight of the King*”, a ruler who really cares for the welfare of his people. Jesus in his parables explained how some would rule over ten cities, and some over five. So also the prophet records “*Wisdom and knowledge shall be the stability of these times*,” Is.33:6.

No longer would the markets control food production, ramping up prices to fill vast profits; for there will certainly be an equilateral revolution, so that the produce of the earth will be for all. Yes! And there will be climate change, for the natural disasters that destroy mankind's best endeavours will be abated. Instead of extremes of weather, there will be a universal temperate climate. Mankind will neither destroy the earth nor save it! For the earth is the Lords and it is not within the power of governments to control the elements, only to ratchet up taxes! No, this will come to an end, the earth will yield her increase, the deserts will be conquered, with rivers and flourishing trees as the ploughman overtakes the reaper, providing an abundant provision.

With such a revolution, work will not be onerous but a pleasure. Instead of people being confined to concrete cubicles and vast sheds under artificial light, peering into artificial screens in an artificial cyber world, they will have time to live in the real world. Time to savour its delights and reflect on its creation; time to appreciate the wisdom behind it and to seek out the mind of God. Time to be instructed in God's ways and be taught, not by a bunch of theorists whose opinions are ever changing; but by those who have discovered by their own experience, not only the reason for their own flesh and blood existence, but the reality of eternal life.

Freed from the anxieties of day to day living under artificial conditions, the health of men and women will vastly improve. Given the reason and purpose in life, they will learn a new creativity. They will learn to relate properly the one to the other, finding time to really care for their families, relearning the joys of true parenting. Children growing up in such security and happiness will not be the latch-key kids of today out on the streets, the prey of evil minds, destroying young minds with drugs and crime and reducing them to lead a feral existence. Oh yes! The liberals threw away the knowledge of God, and look what it has resulted in! But can they see it? Too puffed up with their own self-importance they are in total denial.

The time when such vile people shall no more be called liberal but will be exposed for the utter hypocrites they are, and shall find no place in God's Kingdom. Then only hope will be a process of vigorous re-education, the like of which their narrow vision never could have imagined. Anxieties reduced, illness and mental suffering diminished, health will improve so much that life will be extended. Today as conditions have improved, in contrast to 2-3 generations ago,

so life has been extended by 5-10 years for some. But that is nothing for what the Bible has in store. Is.65:22 *"They shall not build and another inhabit, they shall not plant and another eat; for as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and they shall long enjoy the work of their hands."*

So Christ will establish one universal religion: the true worship of God. He will establish universal peace having subdued all nations into a united Empire, the cause for war being abolished; and through a system of divine education, men and women will be enabled to develop to the full extent of their capacity. Leading instead of mean and paltry, selfish and greedy little lives, true nobility, loving their neighbour as themselves and seeking their good, as exemplified in Christ and in his true saints.

Yet sin will still be present in the world population, but gradually it will be eradicated. True there will be incorrigible sinners, but then wilful infringement of divine law will be met with divine justice and death will be the penalty. There will also be those who submit to divine law, not because they agree with it but because they must. These will not appreciate the way in which the primitive Edenic beauty has been restored to the world, nor how greatly the human race has been improved under Christ's direction. Nor how divine blessings have effected all living things, so that carnivores will no longer kill to eat, but will live in harmony. The lion and the ox, the wolf and the lamb shall lie down together!

No! Some will not appreciate it, ambition and pride lay deeply entrenched in the human heart, and toward the end of the thousand years of Christ's reign on earth, the Lord Jesus and his immortal companions will withdraw themselves from the world's activities. Possibly to a celebration in the holy city of the millennial reign. Yet while this is absent the latent but hidden opposition will be let loose and a bid for human supremacy over the world's affairs will be made. Many will be deceived, and imitating the great invasion of former years like Gog and Magog, they will encompass the camp of the saints, but will have badly miscalculated! Their innermost motives revealed, they manifest themselves as rebels against divine authority, and are therefore subject to divine obliteration: "fire came down from heaven and devoured them."

In this way, sin will be eradicated from the earth. Those who remain faithful to Christ will be granted eternal life. Thus, death and hell, or the grave, will be removed for ever from the earth. It will be inhabited entirely with a righteous yet deeply appreciative population. Every one of whom has good reason to be

grateful for God's mercy and an intelligent appreciation of the wisdom of their Creator, so that the knowledge of His glory will fill the earth.

Then comes the general conclusion. With the elimination of death, Christ Jesus delivers up the kingdom to the Father, that God may be all and in all, 1 Cor.15:24. It is the time when the Creator Himself will come to the earth to be enthroned in the midst of all His people. *"The tabernacle of God shall be with men and He will dwell with them. They shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God."* This will be the consummation of God's purpose with Jesus Christ.

What happens thereafter the Bible does not inform us, yet one thing is certain, immortality will never be boring! Just as the Creator has magnified Himself in the universe, doubtless He intends to expand His glory and in this mighty work, His own children will have their part.

This was the hope of the Christians of the first century, the same hope described by the prophets of Israel. Our world is moving towards the greatest crisis the human race has encountered since the Flood. The present order is facing dissolution. The apostle Peter puts to every one who considers this prospect, the question: *"Seeing that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in all holy conversation and godliness?"* Whose side are we on? Are we committed to the service of Christ Jesus, or are we unable to make up our minds? The words of Elijah ringing out over Carmel come to mind, "How long are you going to keep hopping between two opinions?" If the Bible is true, then serve God with all your heart; but if you want to make the world your oyster, go ahead! But know this, it will not be long now before the door of opportunity is closed, and the judgments written will make short work of human plans because only **one plan** will be realised: God's purpose with Jesus Christ.