

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## **Dedication**

This book is dedicated to Jesus the Messiah, who will return soon to reign over the Earth. He came to teach and show us how to live and serve God acceptably. Then he graciously died in our place, that our sins might be forgiven. He told his followers to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things would be given to them. I thank God for saving me at the age of 22. I can testify that I discovered the peace and joy and courage that the Holy Spirit produces in us and that all the other things, all the necessities of life, and more, have fallen into my lap: a good wife, four sons, twelve grandchildren, a 55-year ministry in West Africa doing Bible translation and church-planting, good health, food, shelter, and an abundance of friends. I discovered the righteousness that is provided by God provides and I have the assurance that I'm a child of God and that I'll inherit the coming kingdom of the Messiah. I'm looking forward to the resurrection, sharing the Messiah's glory, and reigning over the Earth.

Praise God! I thank you, Lord Jesus!

## **Background**

It was while translating the Bible into Boko, a language of Benin Republic in West Africa, that Dr Jones first grappled with the meaning of the expression 'kingdom of God.' It seemed impossible to find an expression in Boko which would convey the correct meaning in its various contexts. What does it mean to enter the kingdom of God, or to inherit the kingdom of God? Why did Jesus say the kingdom of God is near, or among people? How do we expect the prayer 'your kingdom come' to be answered?

Jesus said we should be concerned above all else with God's kingdom, and yet on questioning Christians and pastors, local and international, I found that few people can explain the meaning and relevance of the kingdom of God. Those who do know something usually interpret the

kingdom according to their view of the millennium, resulting in very different interpretations of end-time events.

Some interpret the kingdom of God as God's sovereignty over the universe, others as God's rule in our hearts, Christ's present salvation and its benefits, or the new life in Christ. Many tend to think of heaven as our destination, and the kingdom of God becomes a shadowy doctrine rather than the glorious truth that God has made the saints a kingdom of priests who will reign with the Messiah over the earth.

This new look at the theology of the kingdom of God clarifies many of the riddles concerning the kingdom and presents a new understanding of Jesus and his ministry as the Messiah. The book explains clearly what Jesus meant by this unique and cryptic phrase, and it makes sense in every context. The kingdom of God is truly a pearl of great price to be eagerly awaited as the return of the Messiah draws ever nearer.

## **Introduction**

This book stands or falls on the four theses presented below. If these interpretations are correct, this book will revolutionize your understanding of Jesus and the Gospels. It will clarify for you the mystery of why John the Baptist and Jesus went about preaching the gospel of the *kingdom*, why Jesus spoke in parables, and why he used cryptic expressions like *the kingdom of God*, *the kingdom of heaven*, and *the Son of Man*. More importantly, it will help you interpret the end times correctly, including a scriptural view of the Rapture, the Great Tribulation, and the Millennium. But most of all it will help you appreciate the wonderful position believers have in our union with Christ, which culminates in our being co-heirs with the Messiah in his future earthly reign.

Before looking at the four theses I will present on the kingdom of God, let me warn you of some common misconceptions people have about it. The kingdom of God is a pre-church concept and it was Jesus' main topic in his preaching. Don't go to the apostle Paul for understanding; he doesn't say a lot about it. The kingdom of God is not 'an inward power which enters the human soul and lays hold of it' (Adolf von Harnack). No Scripture teaches that. The kingdom of God is not to be identified with the church as per fifth-century church father Augustine. The kingdom of God is not about transforming the world by a slow and

gradual permeation, as anyone can see today. The kingdom of God has its origin in heaven but is not to be equated with heaven. The kingdom of God is not restricted to a geographical territory like the UK or the population belonging to such a territory, it involves the whole world.

## **First thesis:**

**The kingdom of God, as preached by Jesus, is not primarily about God's sovereignty; it is not God's kingdom; it is an earthly kingdom established by God. It is the Messiah's kingdom.**

The term 'kingdom of God' used by Jesus does not refer to God's eternal reign over the universe. There is a sense in which everything belongs to God, so that meaning cannot be ruled out completely, but the meaning Jesus gave to the expression will never be grasped if the kingdom of God is regarded as God's kingdom. It is rather the kingdom that comes from God in contrast to kingdoms set up by human rulers. It is an earthly kingdom with a human king, Jesus the Messiah. Jesus always used this expression to refer to his messianic kingdom, or by metonymy, to refer to himself as the Messiah. This implies that the kingdom of God cannot be equated with anything that existed before the Messiah arrived. The term *kingdom of God* does not occur in the Old Testament, however, most of the prophets prophesied about it. Nor should it be equated with heaven or the church. The kingdom of God is all about the Messiah and the kingdom he will establish here on earth immediately following his return. All the Old Testament prophecies relating to the Messiah and his reign from Jerusalem will be fulfilled literally, as the original prophecies were meant to be understood.

The Hebrew and Greek words for kingdom are complex and have several meanings, both concrete (territory), and abstract (kingship, rule, royal power). When coupled with predicates like *arrive*, *is near*, or *is among*, the expression refers to the king himself, in whose person the kingdom resides. In other words, the declaration that the kingdom of God is near meant that the Messiah was near. This truth is often acknowledged but even more frequently ignored. Misunderstanding this declaration results in the false ideas that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated and that Jesus is ruling the world now, even though there is no evidence of it.

## **Second thesis:**

**The Gospels present Jesus first and foremost as the Jewish Messiah who will one day return to rule over the whole Earth.**

To the Jews of Jesus' day, the Messiah was a hugely important hope, even though he was an enigmatic figure, sometimes human, and sometimes divine, sometimes a servant and sometimes a king. But what was in no doubt was that when he came, he would reign visibly over the Earth from the throne of David in Jerusalem. The Jews were expecting a peaceful and prosperous kingdom, which God would establish through his 'Son', the Messiah. 'Son' to them meant 'regent', a man who would rule the Earth on God's behalf. He would raise the dead, renovate the earth, and reign over all the nations of the world forever. This was the common view of the kingdom of God among Jews when they spoke of these things with Jesus.

The word 'Christ' is a transliteration of the Greek word Χριστός, meaning Messiah. The significance of the word eludes modern readers; it is more like a personal name than the title of a Jewish king who would one day subdue all the enemies of Israel and bring in an era of universal peace on the Earth. The Gospels are full of messianic designations: Son of God, Son of Man, Son of David, king of the Jews and even Lord, but when we pray 'your kingdom come', it doesn't register with many people that we are praying for the Messiah to return and reign. God's kingdom can't come; it is eternal. God is always on the throne. It is the Messiah's reign that we hope in and pray for. This messianic kingdom is eternal, because it has no end. At the end of his reign on Earth, Jesus will surrender his royal power to the Father, after having done away with every ruler, authority and power, so that God may be all in all (1 Cor 15:24-25).

## **Third thesis:**

**The primary meaning of 'kingdom' in its biblical use is abstract, meaning 'kingship' or 'royal power'. In a concrete sense, it can mean a geographical domain, or the Messiah himself, or the monarchy. Only in a remote way does it relate to salvation, or a new life in Christ, or the Church, or heaven.**

The biblical references to entering and inheriting the kingdom of God must be interpreted correctly with these meanings in mind. For example,

Jesus said, the poor in spirit are blessed, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them! (Mt 5:3). In what way does it belong to them? How can you possess a kingdom? It is not by entering the geographical domain of a kingdom as a subject, or by getting saved, or by finding a new life in Christ. You possess it by being a ruler in the government. The Scriptures never say people are entering the kingdom as subjects or citizens but as something far more glorious. They enter as sons of God and co-heirs with the Messiah. Because of their union with the Messiah, the saints will reign with him over the Earth. They will sit at the royal table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This is the exciting teaching of Jesus concerning the kingdom of God.

### **Fourth thesis:**

**The kingdom of God has a secret aspect to it that was not revealed to the prophets. This secret is that the Church, the community that Jesus the Messiah is calling out from every people, tribe, nation, and language, will rule with the Messiah in the kingdom of God.**

There are Old Testament prophecies concerning the Gentiles, but the mystery of the Church was not known until it was revealed to the apostles. Paul, in Ephesians, speaks about God's secret plan regarding the Messiah, which is that both Gentiles and Jews who believe the gospel of the kingdom will share equally in the riches inherited by God's children. God's purpose is to use the Church to display his wisdom in its rich variety to all the unseen rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm. This is his eternal plan which he carried out through Jesus the Messiah. Don't think of the Church as a building, a congregation, or a denomination; the Church is the total community of God's people, those who in Scripture are called the elect, the righteous, the saints, or simply God's servants.

Revelation 7:9 tells us about a vast crowd, too great to count, from every nation, tribe, people and language. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. God, according to his great love, mercy, and grace, is presently saving people from all nations and cultures. They are the true believers from all times and places. They are saved through faith in the Messiah and are united to him. They receive the gift of eternal life and will reign with the Messiah throughout his reign over the Earth, and on into eternity. As co-heirs with Christ, these international saints are the government in the kingdom of God!

## Interpretation

It is important to interpret the Bible correctly, firstly by treating it as God's infallible word. When reading or exegeting the Bible, the text should not be doubted. Textual scholars have examined the thousands of ancient manuscripts and have given us the best possible authorized text. In addition, God told us that all Scripture is God-breathed (2 Tim 3:16), and Jesus said that heaven and earth will pass away, but his words will never pass away.

Where possible, God's word should be taken literally and not spiritualized or allegorized. This is not always possible; the genre is important. Parables and metaphors are not to be taken literally. Nor can a prophet's visions be taken literally, but when you interpret the symbolism and metaphors, you will be left with a message that you must take literally. Passages like Genesis 1-11, Old Testament messianic prophecies, and Revelation 20 communicate a clear meaning when interpreted literally and are in accord with related Scriptures. But there are many words in apocalyptic literature, like the book of Revelation, that have a symbolic meaning and have to be interpreted. And John's visions are like dreams that reflect reality but are not seen in the normal way we perceive reality, so they need to be interpreted carefully, which doesn't necessarily mean they have to be spiritualized. The unfolding of God's words illuminates, providing understanding to the simple (Ps 119:130).

The kingdom of God is a key term that occurs 162 times in the New Testament. It needs to be translated with great care so that it doesn't cause misunderstanding instead of enlightenment. Spiritualise it like the amillennialists do, and you will never understand what Jesus was saying. Thanks to my experience as a linguist and Bible translator over five decades, I have come to an understanding of the term that makes sense in every context, and it is truly like a treasure hidden in a field. However, it is a radically different concept from that held by your average churchgoer or pastor. One problem is that Jesus was preaching in a hostile environment and couldn't talk plainly in public about the fact that he was born to be a king and that one day he would rule the world. We can't change the way Jesus spoke about it, but I think there is a good argument, which will be explained later, for interpreting the 'the kingdom of God' as 'the kingdom from God', and 'the kingdom of heaven' as 'the kingdom from heaven'.

This book contains many Scripture quotations and Bible references. I have translated the passages myself rather than using any particular translation. I feel that I am qualified to do this as I studied Greek and Hebrew in my theological education, I have a PhD in linguistics, and I have spent 55 years as a Bible translator. This book is written with the desire that you might understand the Bible correctly, so I make no excuse for the copious Bible references. I would encourage you to be like the Bereans, who examined the Scriptures daily to see if what Paul told them was true (Acts 17:11).

## **Understanding the background**

God's revelation throughout the Scriptures is progressive. The prophets saw bits and pieces about the Messiah and the kingdom, but they couldn't put it all together. Sometimes he was a healer, sometimes he was suffering. Sometimes he was a servant, sometimes he was a king. But the time has come for the righteous to have a full understanding. Jesus told his disciples that the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven had been given to them but not to others (Mt 13:11).

Most people didn't understand Jesus when he went from village to village proclaiming the kingdom of God, speaking in parables and using expressions like 'the kingdom of God', 'the kingdom of heaven', and 'the Son of Man'. Most people today are equally ignorant, whether unbelievers, churchgoers, pastors, and even theologians. But we believers have the right to know the secrets of the kingdom of heaven. I trust that in the following pages you will find an acceptable way of interpreting it. None of these ideas are entirely new, but every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings both new and old things out of his treasure chest (Mt 13:52).

## **Whose kingdom is it?**

The first secret we need to understand is the meaning of the phrase, the kingdom of God. We are to be excused if we think of Old Testament passages that describe the sovereignty of God, like this:

Lord, it's you who possess greatness, power, honor, majesty, and glory because everything in heaven and on earth is yours. You're the king. You're exalted as head over all. Wealth and honor come

from you; you rule over everything. Authority and power are in your hands. It's you who can exalt people and make them strong (1 Chron 29:11-12).

My understanding is that the kingdom of God expression, as used by Jesus, never refers to God's sovereign rule over heaven and earth as we have it here in Chronicles. The 'kingdom of God' expression is not used in the Old Testament, and it is never used in the New Testament with that meaning. Jesus spoke about the kingdom being near or coming, which is not suitable terminology for God's eternal sovereignty. Jesus spoke of people entering and inheriting the kingdom, which again, cannot refer to God's eternal sovereignty. Few people understand the meaning given to this expression by Jesus. The Gospels all start with emphasis on the fact that Jesus was the Messiah, and Jesus always used the kingdom of God expression to refer either to himself as the Messiah, to his disciples as being part of his monarchy, or to his future earthly kingdom. 'Christ' is a transliteration of the Greek word Χριστός, which in turn is equivalent to the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ 'the anointed one'. It is not a surname, it usually means 'the Messiah', the promised Jewish savior and king. However, the real significance of the word gets lost, and Jesus Christ just sounds like a name.

## **Jesus' need for secrecy**

Jesus said he spoke in parables because he didn't want everyone to understand what he was talking about. He made this clear. He wanted his disciples to understand, but there were others in the crowd and he didn't want them to understand what he said.

He was born to be the Messiah, the king of the Jews, but he could not publicize this fact in his teaching. The Jews were dominated by Rome, which wouldn't tolerate a rival king, and among the Jewish leaders, some kings and leaders did not want to tolerate a rival king. Endeavoring to solve this perceived threat, King Herod gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its vicinity who were under two years of age but Jesus had already escaped to Egypt. So, when Jesus started preaching, he communicated with his disciples about his true identity, but he wasn't so explicit about it in public.

There are three ways he got around this problem. One way was to use a cryptic expression like, the kingdom of God. The second was to use

another cryptic expression, ‘Son of Man,’ as a title for himself, which he used in the third person, so the crowds weren’t sure if he was talking about himself or somebody else. And thirdly, he spoke in parables. Most of the parables are about the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, which Matthew favors, and which is usually regarded as synonymous with the kingdom of God.

The revelation that the kingdom of God is the Messiah’s reign should not be so startling because when you think about the alternative, that the kingdom of God refers to God’s reign, you run into unsolvable problems. How can you enter or inherit God’s sovereignty over the universe? There are many references to the kingdom of God coming, and if you believe in an almighty, sovereign, eternal God, you should immediately realize that to talk about his kingdom or reign coming is an oxymoron. The kingdom of God is something smaller than that; it only relates to the government of this world.

Jesus taught us to pray: Your kingdom come, your will be done on Earth as it is in heaven. What are we praying for? Do you think about the Church, or Christian missions, or God ruling in our hearts? Or are you praying for Jesus to come back and for his messianic reign to begin here on Earth? The kingdom of God is the kingdom of the Messiah, the advent of which was the supreme desire of pious Jews. The Father reigns supreme eternally; it is not his kingdom that is coming. The prayer is addressed to the Father, but the kingdom we pray for is not his own, it is the kingdom that he promised (1 Chron 17:11-14, Dan 2:44).

## **What kind of kingdom is it?**

Not many details about the Messiah’s earthly reign are revealed in the New Testament, and if you are not a premillennialist, you might find the concept of an earthly reign rather novel. How will the resurrected, glorified Messiah reign over an imperfect Earth? And how will the righteous, who will be resurrected at his return, reign with him in their resurrected bodies?

Most of Jesus’ instruction about the kingdom of God was given while preaching to Jews, who were conversant with the prophecies made by their prophets. They weren’t hoping to go to heaven; that was never a biblical promise. They were like Job, who said he knew that his

Redeemer lived and that *in the end, he would stand upon the earth* (Job 19:25).

The Messiah is a Jewish Savior and king, but his earthly kingdom isn't only for Jews; the Gentiles will also be part of it. If you haven't been taught to expect an earthly kingdom, you may find the concept has a stigma about it. How can resurrected people mix with ordinary mortals? Many of us have grown up with Platonic and Augustinian values; we instinctively feel that the spiritual is superior to the physical, that heaven is more desirable than the Earth. But Hebrew philosophy holds that God's creation is good. God created a perfect Earth, and he walked with Adam in the Garden of Eden. John tells us that the throne of God and the Lamb will come down to Earth, and God will once more live with humans in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21:3).

My book on the Old Testament end-time prophecies portrays the Messiah's kingdom as an earthly kingdom with the Messiah reigning from Mount Zion. Jesus will sit on David's throne and reign over the world with justice, righteousness, and peace. Believers will be resurrected and transformed at his coming and will reign with him.

Robert Mounce (The Book of Revelation, p. 359), says that some commentators suggest that the millennium for the apostle John is not the messianic age foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, but a special reward for martyrs who have paid with their lives. He concludes by saying that John taught a literal millennium, but its essential meaning may be realized in something other than a temporal fulfillment. Other voices deny the existence of an earthly millennium, and if that is true, my belief that the kingdom of God is the Messiah's kingdom as described in Old Testament prophecies is wrong. But, no matter how strange some future events may seem to us, we must respect Scripture. Some of the Old Testament prophecies end with the solemn words, 'I, the Lord, have spoken!' And what of the words of the angel Gabriel to Mary concerning her baby Jesus? Gabriel declared that he would be great and would be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God would give him the throne of his ancestor David, and he would rule over Jacob's descendants forever. His kingdom would never end (Lk 1:32-33).

## Jesus' proclamation of the kingdom

There is a satisfactory answer to all these riddles, but it might necessitate a change in worldview, especially one's view of Jesus and what he came to accomplish. The kingdom is mentioned over fifty times in Matthew and mostly from the mouth of Jesus.

From that time on, Jesus began to preach, saying: Repent, because the kingdom of heaven is near (Mt 4:17).

Jesus used to tour around Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and healing people of every disease and illness (Mt 4:23).

Go and proclaim this message: The kingdom from heaven is near! (Mt 10:7).

Gentiles tend to focus on the Gentile part of the gospel, and the spiritual side of salvation, for example, God so loved the *world* that he gave his only Son (Jn 3:16). They say, God does not only love Israel, he loves all the nations. In fact, he loves the nations so much that some say his love for Israel is history. Christianity is all about the gospel being preached in all the world, churches being established, and people being saved, but let us not forget our roots. Take Isaiah 9:6-7 for example, which we are reminded about at Christmas time.

For a child has been born for us, we have been given a son. God will put the government on his shoulder, and he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. There'll be no limit to the greatness and peace of his rule. He'll rule on David's throne over his kingdom, and he'll establish it firmly and judge justly, doing what is right from that time on and forevermore.

We love to embrace wonderful messianic prophecies like this one and apply them to Jesus as we visualize him. But what about his government and his rule from the throne of David? We somehow cast that aside or spiritualize it. But we have here a prophecy of the kingdom of God, the kingdom that Jesus preached about. Jesus is presently seated at the Father's right hand in heaven, but until he arrives and is physically seated on David's throne, we cannot claim that the kingdom of God has come, or that Jesus is king over the Earth. True, he is seated at the right

hand of the Father on his throne, but we are never told anywhere in the Bible that Jesus is reigning or will reign over the Earth from the Father's throne. As Son of Man and Son of God, that is not his role. He only becomes King of kings and Lord of lords on Earth at his return, when he conquers his enemies at Armageddon (Rev 17:24, 19:16) and rules over the Earth.

As the Lord's Supper ended, Jesus said to his disciples that he was conferring a kingdom on them, just as his Father had conferred a kingdom on him, that they might eat and drink at his table in his kingdom and sit on thrones to govern the twelve tribes of Israel (Lk 22:28-30). The kingdom Jesus was talking about is the Messianic kingdom. It is an earthly kingdom (Rev 5:10), and the king is none other than Jesus himself.

## **The saints will rule the world**

As a fitting climax to this introduction to the kingdom of God, consider a wonderful vision that the prophet Daniel had (Dan 7). In his vision he saw someone like a "son of man" coming, accompanied by heavenly clouds. He approached the Ancient of Days (God) and was presented before him. Dominion was bestowed upon him, along with glory and a kingdom, so that all peoples, nations, and languages were to serve him. His kingdom would be an everlasting rule that would never be destroyed (Dan 7:13-14). Jesus announced to his disciples that all things had been handed over to him by his Father (Mt 11:27), and that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to him (Mt 28:18). Although written over 2500 years ago, Daniel was talking about things relevant to the end of this age. He spoke about Antichrist and a period of great tribulation that will occur immediately before the second coming of Jesus. It was from this passage that Jesus took the title 'Son of Man' and used it to refer to himself as the Messiah.

And finally, to whet your appetite a bit more, listen to what an angel told Daniel when he asked about the meaning of the vision. The angel said that the kingship, authority, and greatness of all *the kingdoms of the Earth would be given to the saints of the high places*. This kingdom will endure forever, and all authorities will serve them and obey them (Dan 7:27). When did you last hear a sermon preached on that passage? Are you numbered among those saints? Is your name written in the Lamb's Book of Life? Is it your destiny to inherit the kingdom of God and to

reign with Christ over this Earth? If so, it will be nice to know the details.

## **Kingdom of God Time Chart**

### **Preliminary signs (Mt 24)**

- The return of Israel to their land (Ezek 37:21-22)
- Israel's prosperity (Ezek 36:11, 35)
- World evangelization is almost accomplished (Mt 24:14)
- All nations will hate you because of me (Mt 24:9)
- Moral degeneration and false religions (Mt 24:12, 2 Tim 3:1-5)

## **The Rise of Babylon**

### **The first 3½ years (Rev 6-9)**

- The rise of Babylon; a world empire (Dan 7:7, 19, 24, Rev 6:1-4)
- Antichrist takes peace from the world, starts WW3 (6:3-4)
- Worldwide famine results from warfare (6:5-6)
- One-quarter of humanity perishes as a result of war, famine, and pestilence (6:7-8)
- Living saints are sealed for their eternal security (7:1-8)
- The environment is ruined as a result of WW3 (8:7-12)

One-third of the land and vegetation are burned up.

One-third of the sea is polluted.

One-third of rivers and springs are polluted.

Light is reduced by one-third.

- Antichrist becomes world leader (6:2, 13:1-4) and makes a seven-year covenant with Israel, the final week of Daniel's 70 weeks (Dan 9:24) when a most holy place (the third temple) will be anointed.
- The temple will be built (2 Thess 2:4, Rev 11:2) while two powerful witnesses, based on the anointed prophets, Haggai and Zechariah (Zech 8:9) who built the second temple, preach in Jerusalem to the remnant of Israel.

## The last 3½ years (Rev 10-18)

- Satan is ejected from heaven (Rev 12:7-9). He seeks to thwart God's redemptive plan by empowering the Antichrist to exterminate Israel but God gives them refuge in the wilderness. The Antichrist then goes off to wage war against Christians. (Rev 12:13-17)
- The abomination that causes desolation. Near the middle of the seven years, Antichrist breaks the covenant and puts an end to sacrifice and offering at the temple. The false prophet deceives the nations with miracles and enforces the worship of the Antichrist (13:11-17). He sets up an image of the Antichrist in the temple and requires everyone to receive his mark. Cf. Dan 8:25, 11:36, Mt 24:15-16, 2 Thess 2:3-4.
- Empowered by Satan, the Antichrist slanders God, demands worship during 42 months (13:5-6), and persecutes and kills Christians (12:13-17, 13:7-8) and conquers them.
- Victorious martyrs from all nations await Messiah's kingdom in heaven (6:9-11, 7:9-17, 14:1-5, 15:2-4)
- Judgment is poured out on creation, painful sores afflict unbelievers, the sea is destroyed, fresh water is polluted, and the sun's heat is intensified (16:1-9)
- Unbelievers follow the Antichrist (13:2b, 8). They are tortured for five months by a 'locust' army (9:1-11) and with darkness and pain (16:10-11)
- The battle of Armageddon. A third of humanity is killed by worldwide armies converging on Jerusalem (9:13-19, 14:17-20, 16:12-16, 19:17-21). Cf. Zech 12:2-3, 14:2.
- There is a worldwide earthquake, the worst ever known, the cities collapse (6:12-17 16:18-21), and the last world empire falls (Ch. 17-18). Cf. Mt 24:29. The sun and moon are darkened.
- The Antichrist kills the two prophets, who are resurrected after 3 ½ days. A severe earthquake kills 7000 people in Jerusalem and the Jewish survivors give glory to God. They are now ready to believe in the Messiah.

- The Lord makes Jerusalem an immovable rock to those laying siege (Zech 12:1-9, 14:12-15).

### **The Messiah returns (Rev 19:1)**

- The Messiah descends from the darkness with power and great glory (1:7, 19:11-13). The righteous dead come with him (19:14), Cf. 1 Thess 4:14.
- The dead in Christ rise from the dead, the living saints are raptured (14:15-16), Cf. 1 Thess 4:15-17, they all meet the Lord in the air and remain with him forever.
- The Lord descends to the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:4) with his saints (Zech 14:5b). He enters through the eastern gate (Ezek 43:2, 4) and suddenly comes to his temple (Mal 3:1)
- The New Jerusalem (the bride of the Lamb) descends to rest above the temple (21:2-10). God and the resurrected saints live and reign from there.
- The world's armies are slaughtered at Armageddon (14:17-20, 19:15-21). The Antichrist and the false prophet are thrown into hell (19:20). Cf. Isa 52:7-10, Zech 12:9
- From Zion, the Lord pours out on Israel a spirit of grace and the whole nation is converted (1:7, 11:13) Cf. Zech 12:10-14
- The Lord is king over all the earth (11:15-17, 20:4-6 cf. Ps 22:27-29, Isa 24:23, Jer 3:17, Obad 15, 17, 21, Zech 14:9). He rules over Israel as the promised Messiah, a descendant of David (Jer 33:14-7)

### **The millennium (Rev 20 – 22:5)**

- The binding of Satan (20:1-3)
- The Messiah begins his reign (11:15-17)
- The righteous rule with the Messiah for 1000 years (20:4-6), Cf. Dan 7:27
- The renewed heavens and earth (21:1), Cf. Isa 65:17-25
- Satan is released, the final rebellion of the wicked against Israel and Jerusalem and their destruction (20:7-10)

- The last judgment and the end of the physical universe (20:11-13, 15), Death and Hades are banished forever (20:14) unbelievers are cast into hell (20:15)
- The saints live and rule with God forever in the holy city, the New Jerusalem (21:2 - 22:5)