

# GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE CHURCH

PART IV

BY DR. RON J. BIGALKE JR.

THE NEW TESTAMENT  
of Our Lord and Saviour  
**Jesus Christ**

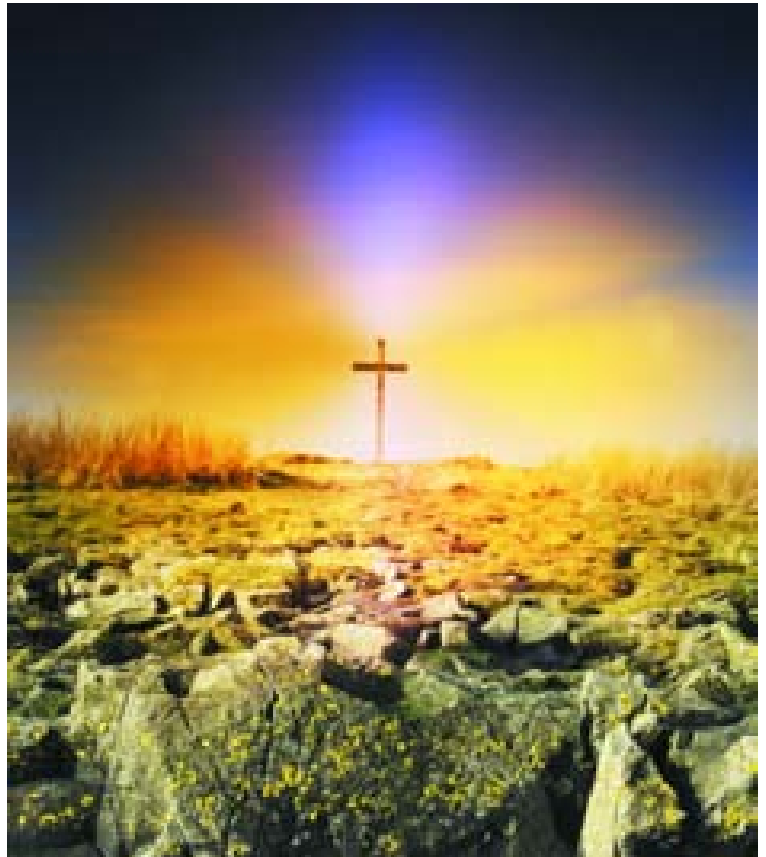
TRANSLATED OUT OF THE ORIGINAL GREEK,  
AND WITH THE MOST FIDELIOUS TRANSLATIONS  
AND WITH THE MOST FIDELIOUS TRANSLATIONS  
AND WITH THE MOST FIDELIOUS TRANSLATIONS

---

Amillennialism does not deny the literal return of Jesus Christ (which is taught to occur at the consummation of the church age), but it does communicate falsely that the church age is presently the kingdom of God; therefore (according to the amillennial view) there will not be a future literal reign of Jesus Christ on the earth.

**A**s deduced from the statement in Revelation 20:4 (“...and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years”), the word millennium is derived from the Latin *mille* (“thousand”) and *annum* (“year”). The early church referred to the millennium by the Greek term, *chiliasm*. In conservative theology, there are three major views concerning the nature of the thousand years of Revelation 20. How one understands the millennium will also influence views concerning the details of eschatology.<sup>1</sup> Currently, amillennialism and premillennialism are the dominant views of the millennium (postmillennialism was dominant among early liberalism; however, today it is dominant only among Reconstructionists, leaders within the Word of Faith Movement, and the cults). There are hermeneutical (interpretative) reasons for the differences, such as whether to understand “thousand” in Revelation 20 as literal or symbolic.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this article is not to examine these differences *per se*, but to explain the doctrine of the kingdom and its relationship to the church. When appropriate, premillennial doctrine will be regarded as the biblical teaching.

The millennium is the kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, and includes not only spiritual blessings, but also glorious expectation. Specifically, the term premillennialism refers to the future literal reign of Jesus Christ on David's throne in Jerusalem. Premillennialism is in contrast to amillennialism and postmillennialism. Amillennialism does not deny the literal return of Jesus Christ (which



is taught to occur at the consummation of the church age), but it does communicate falsely that the church age is presently the kingdom of God; therefore, (according to the amillennial view) there will not be a future literal reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. Postmillennialism also does not deny the literal return of Jesus Christ (which is taught to occur after the millennium), but it does communicate that the church will inaugurate the kingdom of God (which is not a literal thousand years but rather consisting of a long indefinite duration) through the moral and spiritual influence of Gospel preaching and teaching.

Indeed, the beginning of the church was her formation at Pentecost. God's plan of salvation truly began when He provided the skin of an animal to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve (Gen 3:21). However, the church is not merely another phase in salvation history.

**THE DOCTRINE OF THE KINGDOM**

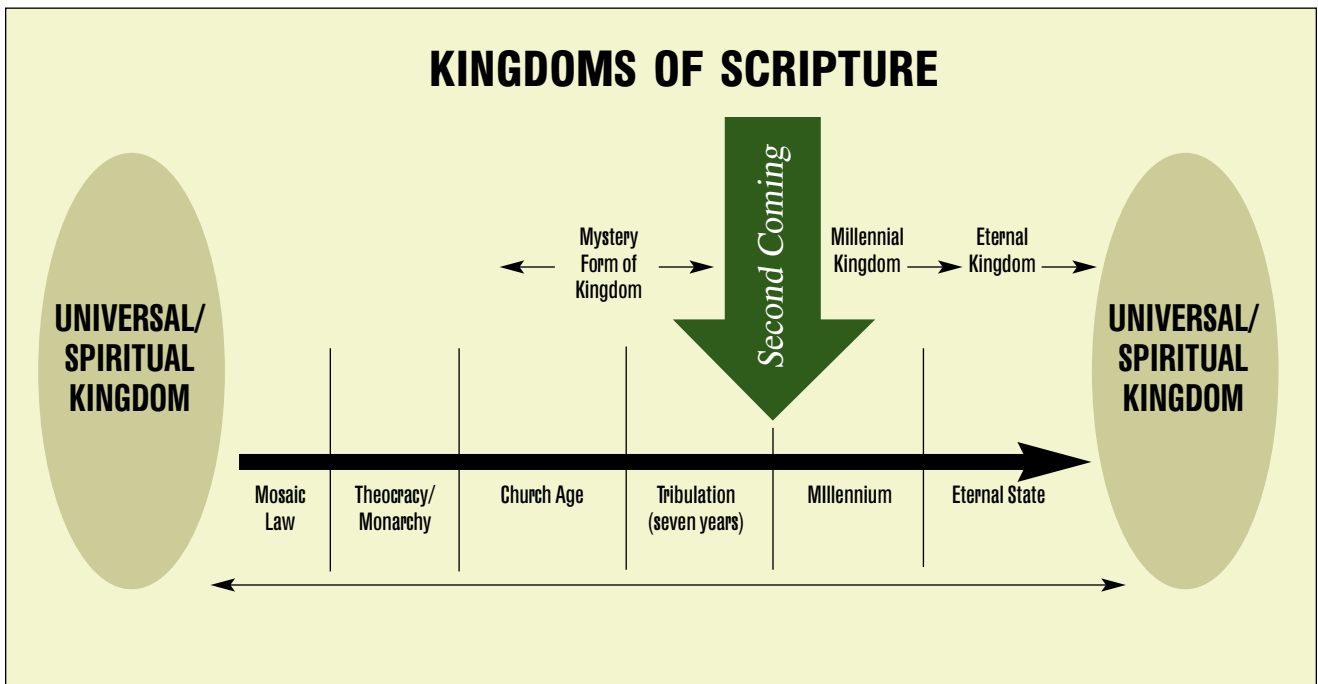
Premillennialism is the biblical teaching that when Jesus Christ returns to earth, He will inaugurate His kingdom for a literal thousand years. Christ will reign personally and visibly during the millennium. This is an important distinction because many conservative evangelicals believe there is only one general, inclusive rule of God in the hearts of all His people. According to such an understanding, the kingdom of God is essentially soteriological (soteriology is the doctrine of salvation). For instance, Dr. John Walvoord explained the amillennial view.

Amillennial interpreters combine various forms of "kingdom" into one concept, namely, a kingdom of God.... In keeping with this general conclusion that all the kingdoms are phases of one kingdom idea, many hold that soteriology is the one factor that binds them all together. . . . Salvation is obviously a major part of this revelation, but not the totality. The whole theory that

all kingdoms should be reduced to the soteriological equivalent is not what the Bible teaches in its doctrine of the various kingdoms.<sup>3</sup>

As Walvoord noted, the concept of the kingdom cannot be reduced to soteriology alone. There are other aspects of the kingdom in Scripture. The concept of the kingdom of God is the major theme or purpose of divine election. The entirety of world history—from Genesis to Revelation—concerns the progression of the kingdom of God. The doctrine of the various kingdoms of Scripture can be visualized in the following diagram.

As seen in the diagram, the concept of the kingdom includes more than one aspect. The definition of a kingdom would include the following: (1) the ruler; (2) the ruled; and, (3) the realm. Walvoord noted the importance of observing "that the Scriptures themselves give a detailed description of various spheres [aspects] of kingdom." Therefore, to ignore the biblical



---

The spiritual kingdom is God's rule over His people at all times in history (John 3:3; Col 1:13; Heb 1:4-14; 2 Pet 1:11). The ruler is the triune God. The ruled includes the elect of humanity and the angels. The realm is from eternity past to eternity future.

distinctions will result in "erroneous conclusions in the doctrine of the kingdom" and confusion in regards to an "understanding of God's promises."<sup>4</sup> The various aspects of the kingdom include: (1) the universal kingdom; (2) the millennial (Davidic/Messianic) kingdom; (3) the mystery form of the kingdom; (4) the spiritual kingdom; and, (5) the kingdom of man.

The universal kingdom is God's sovereign rule of history from creation throughout eternity (1 Chron 29:11; Ps 96:13; 103:19; 145:9-13; Dan 2:37). The ruler of the universal kingdom is the triune God. The ruled is all creation (including heaven and earth). The realm is all time and eternity. It is God's inclusive sovereign rule of history from creation throughout eternity.

The millennial (Davidic/Messianic) kingdom is according to God's promise to Israel (2 Sam 7:5-16; 1 Chron 17:3-15; Rev 20:1-10). The ruler of the millennial kingdom will be the King, Jesus Christ (as King David ruled in history). The ruled is the earth and its inhabitants. The realm is during the thousand year following the second coming of Jesus Christ. This kingdom could also be called the single, unified, mediatorial kingdom that existed historically under the Mosaic Covenant and was prophesied by the Old Testament prophets to be restored in its former glory at the second coming. It is the same kingdom John the Baptist preached and Jesus offered to Israel at His first coming. It is, therefore, the same kingdom that Israel rejected in the first century. The kingdom is historic, prophetic, offered, and rejected.

The mystery form of the kingdom is the church age, which encompasses the period between the comings of Christ (Matt 13). The ruler of the mystery form of the king-

dom is Jesus Christ. The ruled is Christendom. The realm is the period between the comings of Christ.

The spiritual kingdom is God's rule over His people at all times in history (John 3:3; Col 1:13; Heb 1:4-14; 2 Pet 1:11). The ruler is the triune God. The ruled includes the elect of humanity and the angels. The realm is from eternity past to eternity future.

The kingdom of man includes humanity as ruler (Gen 10-11; 11:31-12:9; Rev 17-18). The ruled, of course, is mankind. The realm began at the Tower of Babel and will culminate at the beginning of the millennial kingdom. God's blessed provision to end the kingdom of man began in history with the calling of Abram for the purpose of establishing His kingdom through the nation of Israel.

## THE CHURCH AND THE KINGDOM

It is noteworthy that the Greek terms *ekklesia* ("church") and *basileia* ("kingdom") are distinguished. Enns noted, "The terms *church* and *kingdom* are never used interchangeably in Scripture. Of the 114 occurrences of the word *church* (GK. *Ekklesia*), it is never equated with the kingdom."<sup>5</sup> The uses of the terms in the New Testament indicate distinctions.

Radmacher clarified, "Thus, this entire advancing change of emphasis from *basileia* to *ekklesia* and back to the *basileia* yet to come may not be overlooked . . . it serves to emphasize the fact that the *ekklesia* and the *basileia* are two distinct entities in the eternal program of God."<sup>6</sup> Consequently, the millennial (Davidic/Messianic) kingdom will be different from the church age.

There is, however, a relationship of the church to the kingdom. Ryrie explained, "If one were to try to summarize the relationship of the church to the kingdom, he would have

The church age, however, is not a component of the millennial (Davidic/ Messianic) kingdom. The kingdom was rejected by Israel at the first coming, and it will not be fulfilled until after the second coming. This kingdom is a political kingdom, whose ruler is the Lord Jesus Christ. It will commence after the second coming and bring conclusion to the Gentile world domination over the nation of Israel.



Tower of David, Jerusalem

to say that it is related but not equivalent to certain concepts of the kingdom; it is unrelated to another concept; and is equivalent to another. The concept of kingdom must be defined before one can determine the relationship of the church to it.”<sup>7</sup>

The church age can be understood as a component of the universal kingdom. Since God created the church, it exists in the world as a component of the universal kingdom. God “designed it, brought it into being, and rules over it, as He does all aspects of His universe.”<sup>8</sup>

The church age, however, is not a component of the millennial (Davidic/ Messianic) kingdom. The kingdom was rejected by Israel at the first coming, and it will not be fulfilled until after the second coming. This kingdom is a political kingdom, whose ruler is the Lord Jesus Christ. It will commence after the second coming and bring con-

clusion to the Gentile world domination over the nation of Israel. The millennial kingdom will remove all previous earthly kingdoms. The fulfillment of all God's promises in the covenants will be realized in the millennial kingdom. “When this kingdom is established the church will have been resurrected and will reign with Christ over the millennial kingdom.”<sup>9</sup>

The church is now a component of the mystery form of the kingdom. The “mystery” aspect is concerning the unrevealed nature of this kingdom in the Old Testament. This aspect of the kingdom “does not correspond precisely to any of the other kingdoms. It is not specifically the kingdom of God (though it includes the kingdom of God) because there are some in it who apparently are not saved.”<sup>10</sup> Therefore, the relationship of the church to the concept of the kingdom cannot be regarded as a component of other aspects of the kingdom (i.e. the millennial-Davidic/Messianic-kingdom).

## CONCLUSION

To define the doctrine of the kingdom necessitates that one observe all the various aspects that are revealed in Scripture. These aspects of the kingdom include the universal kingdom, the millennial (Davidic/Messianic) kingdom, the mystery form of the kingdom, the spiritual kingdom, and

the kingdom of man. Each of these aspects of the kingdom is described distinctly in Scripture. Understanding the relationship of the church to the kingdom necessitates discernment regarding what aspect of the kingdom is being referenced in Scripture. The millennial kingdom is clearly distinct from the present church age, that is, the mystery form of the kingdom. However, the church will have been resurrected prior to the inauguration of the millennial kingdom and will reign with Christ in that aspect of the kingdom, as it is God's intent to rule personally and visibly upon the earth. Presently, the church is a component of the kingdom of God in the mystery form (interadvent period) of the kingdom. (MC)

### ENDNOTES

- 1 See the six-part series, "Prophetic Timing & the Millennium," *Midnight Call* (August 2007-January 2008).
- 2 Since the text mentions the term "thousand" six times, a plain reading would deduce that the duration is one thousand years.
- 3 John F. Walvoord, "Biblical Kingdoms Compared and Contrasted," in *Issues in Dispensationalism*, gen. eds. Wesley R. Willis and John R. Master (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 84-85.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 74.
- 5 Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1989), 352.
- 6 Earl D. Radmacher, *The Nature of the Church* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle, 1996), 172.
- 7 Charles C. Ryrie, *Basic Theology* (Colorado Springs: Victor Books, 1986), 399.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 398.
- 9 *Ibid.*, 399.
- 10 Walvoord, "Biblical Kingdoms," 81.

Clip and mail to : *Midnight Call*. P.O. Box 280008. Columbia, SC 29228 or Call 1-800-845-2420 (M-F 8-5 EST)

MC 07/08

# Give A Thoughtful Gift That May Count For Eternity.

ONLY  
**\$12**

Your family, relatives and friends need to be updated on events taking place today as they relate to the eternal Word of God. What better way to do that than by sending a gift subscription that keeps coming to them 12 times a year?

With your credit card ready, please call 800-845-2420, or you can fax your order any time to 803-755-6002.

Check  Visa/Master/Discover/Amex  
 Card# \_\_\_\_\_  
 Expires: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

**Don't forget to order a gift subscription!**

- I would like to give gift subscriptions to the name(s) I have listed below and pay only \$12 per subscription (a \$28.95 value).
- I would like to give four gift subscriptions to the names I have listed below. I accept your offer to renew my subscription to *Midnight Call* for one year free of charge (a \$28.95 value).

**2**  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**3**  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**1**  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_

**4**  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 City: \_\_\_\_\_  
 State/Province: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_