

## 2. Acts 3 — Jesus & the Kingdom

To the crowd in Acts 3:13-21, Peter declared that God was giving the Jews an opportunity to repent after the sign of Christ's resurrection. They had refused the "pre-Cross" Jesus; now they were being offered a post-resurrection Messiah. Why was it so important for them to understand Jesus as both Messiah King and Messiah as Suffering Savior?

### God, King of Creation—Direct Rule

Kingship is God's idea; it refers to the sphere of His rule in the universe. God, the king has always been Sovereign, Omnipotent and Omniscient. His kingdom is eternal. *Daniel 4:34*

### Man's Rejection of God's Kingship through Sin

Adam & Eve disobeyed God in that one area of accountability. Because of sin, man's efforts to rule the earth would be much more difficult. God now delegated His rule to people whom He allowed to be rulers.

### God's Rule through Humans—Representative Rule

Human rulers permitted a sphere of political rule under God's permission and direction; God's rule became a representative rule. *Romans 13:1; Daniel 5:21; Genesis 10:8-12; Genesis 17:6; Genesis 35:11; Genesis 49:10*

God set up Israel as a theocratic nation; God would be its king. The sacrificial system temporarily removed sin from the people so God could dwell with them. *Deuteronomy 33:1-5*

### Israel's Rejection through Desiring a Human Ruler

Israel was not content with the theocracy, though. The people demanded a physical king as a strong human ruler. *Deuteronomy 17:14, 15; 28:36; 1 Samuel 8:5,22*

Hannah's song in *1 Samuel 2:10* is the first reference in the Bible to the Lord's anointed—i.e., his anointed king, anticipating the establishment of kingship in Israel and the Messianic ideal in David.

### God and Israel's King—Representative Rule

For God's chosen people, a rightful king was designated by God and anointed by His representative (usually the High Priest) with the approval of the people. He ruled by virtue of a covenant between God and His people, to which the king was a party.

### God and Messiah—Promise of Direct Rule

The Lord's Anointed—"Anointed" is the English translation of the Hebrew word. "Messiah" is the interpretation (transliteration) of it. Since the king is anointed, Messiah equals King.

Messiah as a king differs from earthly kings in that he is also Lord. *Psalms 2:2,10; Isaiah 33:22; 43:3,15*

Messiah as a descendant of David is one God has chosen and enthroned to rule in His name as the official representative of God's rule over His people. The ultimate fulfillment is in Jesus. *2 Samuel 7:14*

## Israel Waits through the Exile, Greek Empire, and Roman Empire

### **Exile—Spiritual Changes**

Cut off from the temple, divested of nationhood and surrounded by pagan religious practices, Israel focused on

- The Law (Torah, first five books of the Old Testament) rather than nationhood
- The belief that they were God's people which found its expression through personal piety and prayer rather than the sacrifices now denied to them. The center of worship was the synagogue.

Result: Judaism became a faith that could be practiced wherever the Torah could be carried which helped preserve Judaism but also prepared the way for the Christian gospel.

### **Israel in the Greek Empire**

After Alexander the Great's death, Israel was ruled by descendants of Alexander's general, Ptolemy, from Egypt. The Ptolemies were considerate of Jewish religious sensitivities.

In 198 B.C., descendants of another of Alexander's generals, Seleucid, took control. Antiochus IV Epiphanes (175-164 B.C.) imposed Greek language and culture on Israel. A segment of the Jewish aristocracy adopted Greek ways; the majority of Jews were outraged. Laws were enforced with extreme cruelty as Antiochus attempted to eradicate the Jewish religion by prohibiting some of the central elements of Jewish practice, destroying copies of the Torah (the Pentateuch), and requiring offerings to the Greek god Zeus. The crowning outrage was the erection of a statue of Zeus and the sacrificing of a pig in the Jerusalem temple itself!

Opposition to Antiochus led by Mattathias, an elderly villager from a priestly family, and his five sons (one named Judas the Maccabee—thus the Maccabean revolt). The event is memorialized in the celebration of Hanukkah. Judas Maccabeus destroyed a Greek altar and killed Antiochus' emissary to their village, triggering a 24-year war resulting in the independence of Judah with Mattathias's sons as rulers. Sadly, the dynasty became corrupted and turned into an aristocratic Hellenistic regime (represented later by the Sadducees). Those who had supported the Maccabean revolt soon fell out of favor. The Pharisees (whose sect formed during this turbulent time period) were actually persecuted by their own leaders for about 30 years of this period in Israel's history.

### **Israel in the Roman Empire**

In 63 B.C., an expanding Roman empire entered in the picture. Pompey took Jerusalem after a three-month siege of the temple area, massacring priests in the performance of their duties and entering the Most Holy Place. This sacrilege began Roman rule in a way that Jews could neither forgive nor forget!

The Pharisees built a "hedge" around the law to enable Jews to live righteously before God in a world that had changed drastically since the days of Moses. Few in number, they enjoyed the support of the people and were the only group to survive the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70, thus being the spiritual progenitors of modern Judaism. The Roman Senate appointed Herod, a non-Jew, king in 40 B.C. Subject to Rome.

## God Sends Messiah Jesus—Direct Rule Offered

At his birth, Jesus came announced as a King. For 3 years as an adult, Jesus proclaimed God's truth to men and demonstrated that He is God. He delivered men and women from their physical and spiritual ills. The time had come for Him to move on in his role as Israel's Messiah. So, he headed for Jerusalem.

At Bethany, he stopped until the way could be prepared so that when He entered the city people would recognize Him as the Messiah (*Luke 19*), fulfilling Zechariah 9:9 by riding on a young donkey. The crowds understood that Jesus was presenting Himself as the Messiah, capable of bringing in the Kingdom. He entered as a king like David would have entered.

The crowd quoted from *Psalms 118*, a Messianic psalm of praise traditionally sung at Passover. They are filled with joy that Jesus at last is making public proclamation of His Messiahship. All history had pointed towards this single, spectacular event when the Messiah publicly presented Himself to the nation, and God desired that this fact be acknowledged.

### **Israel Rejects Messiah and Direct Rule Once Again**

As a King he was rejected as He Himself prophesied. *Luke 19:14; Luke 18:31-33*

When He was crucified He died as the King of the Jews. *Mt 27:37*

Because the people did not recognize the time of God's coming to them, the city would be totally destroyed. Roman soldiers did this starting in AD 70. Roman general Titus conquered it after a 1-year siege. Only the towers of Herod's palace and a part of the western wall of the temple platform were left. 600,000 Jews were killed. The rest were taken to Rome as slaves. Incidentally, Titus wanted the Temple spared, but it was inadvertently (or so he thought) torched. God's promise was fulfilled.

### **Why the king had to suffer first to deliver his people:**

It was God's plan to deal with sin once and for all so he could have a restored relationship with His creation. *Isaiah 53:5; Luke 24:26; Matthew 26:54*

Humans are less sensitive to their sin than they are to their circumstances. The Israelites never could come to grip with their sins. The leaders had their laws. They didn't need a savior. Because they declared themselves righteous God was expected to do the same. So, they didn't recognize who Jesus really is. *Luke 19:42,44; John 1:10-11*

### **God gave them further opportunity to repent. Acts 3:17-21**

This offer of salvation and of the Kingdom pointed both to God's graciousness and to Israel's unbelief. God was giving the Jews an opportunity to repent after the sign of Christ's resurrection. They had refused the "pre-Cross" Jesus; now they were being offered a post-resurrection Messiah. Peter's words underscore Israel's rejection. They had been given the sign of Jonah but still they refused to believe.

### **Jesus—King of Believers**

In addition to the sovereignty of God manifested in political governments and their rulers, Scripture also bears testimony to a spiritual government...

- In which God rules in the hearts of men
- True ever since the beginning of time
- Includes all who are willingly subject to God, whether men or angels
- Especially includes the rule of God in the hearts of believers in the Church age

The Church Age began—the Kingdom of God present in the hearts of believers through the Holy Spirit. *Colossians 1:13*

### **Jesus—King of Kings**

All will see His visible and glorious kingdom on the earth after the Second Coming. In Revelation, Jesus Christ, the Lamb, is introduced as King of the kings of the earth. *Revelation 1:5; 19:16; 17:14*

Jesus is sovereign over the Kingdom of God until at the resurrection He delivers the Kingdom to His Father. *1 Corinthians 15:24-28*

The Kingdom of God is the dynamic rule of God manifested in Christ to destroy His (spiritual) enemies and to bring to men the blessings of God's reign. The New Testament pictures two victories of God's kingdom:

- Victory over death. Death is denied spiritually through Christ's death and resurrection. Death will be physically defeated at the end of the millennial reign of Christ.
- Victory over Satan. Defeated spiritually at the Cross. Satan will be physically defeated in the lake of fire at the end of the Millennium.

## The Millennial Kingdom, Direct Rule of God on Earth.

In the Millennial Kingdom, Christ will actually be the supreme political ruler as well as the spiritual leader and object of worship.

*Psalm 2* and *Isaiah 11* picture an absolute monarch who will put down wicked men and bring them to subjection. Neither is the description of the present age nor of heaven.

### Major features of the Government of the Millennium are:

- It will be over the entire earth, far beyond the boundaries of any previous earthly kingdom or the kingdom of David himself.
- In establishing this worldwide government, God fulfilled His purpose that man should rule the earth. Christ as the last Adam is able to fulfill this goal. *Daniel 7:13 14*
- The government of Christ will be one of absolute authority and power. *Revelation 19:15*
- During this time Satan is bound and rendered inoperative. The only source of evil in the world will be the sin nature of men still in their human flesh.
- All who oppose him will be punished by even to the point of death. No one will be allowed to rebel against the King. *Psalm 2:9*
- Such an absolute rule does not characterize the rule of Christ over His Church or over the world in the present age.
- The government of Christ in the Millennium will be one of righteousness and peace. *Isaiah 11* and *Psalm 72* are classic passages describing this.
- His reign will be characterized by light. *2 Sam 23:3-4; Psalm 36:9; 27:1; 72:1-8*
- The Messiah will have 4 throne names: 1) Wonderful Counselor, 2) Mighty God, 3) Everlasting Father, and 4) Prince of Peace. He will also be called "The Lord Our Righteousness." *Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6*

## Jesus is Our King — Every Knee Will Bow!

*"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death — even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (Philippians 2:5-11)*