

# Mystery of The Ages

## PART 12 - THE APOSTOLIC AGE IN LIGHT OF AN IMPENDING KINGDOM

### I. THE KINGDOM MESSAGE AND ACCOMPANYING SIGNS

When Nathanael exclaimed - "Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel" (Jn. 1:49), Jesus did not disclaim the title. When Jesus entered on His own ministry His message was the same as John the Baptist's - "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt. 4:17). The repentance called for was a "National Repentance." The Old Testament scriptures clearly teach that the Messianic Kingdom cannot be set up until Israel as a nation repents. In (Matt. 4:23) we read - "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the 'Gospel of the Kingdom'". While this was attended with "signs of bodily healing" we are nowhere told that the "Gospel of the Kingdom" has anything to do with the salvation of the soul. It is to be preached again after the Rapture of the Church for a "witness" unto all nations that the time has come for the setting up of the Kingdom. The inference is that the "Gospel of the Kingdom" has nothing to do with "Salvation," but is simply an announcement that the "Messianic Kingdom" is at hand.

When Jesus sent forth the twelve disciples He commanded them, saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the "lost sheep" of the house of Israel, and as ye go, preach, saying - "The kingdom of heaven is at hand." Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils (demons).." (Matt. 10:5-8). Note again that the works they were to perform were "Kingdom signs," and had no reference to the salvation of the soul. They did not preach the "Gospel of Salvation," but the "Gospel of the Kingdom." The "Gospel of Salvation" is for the whole world, but the disciples were forbidden to go to any but the "House of Israel," thus showing that what they preached was exclusively for Israel. That the disciples were expecting the setting up of a visible earthly kingdom is evidenced by the request of James and John that they might sit, one on the right hand, and the other on the left hand of Jesus in His Kingdom (Mark 10:35-41). If there was to be no earthly Kingdom Jesus would have disabused their minds of that idea, but He confirmed it by saying that the place of honor was not for Him to give, but would be bestowed by His Father (Matt. 20:23).

### II. OTHER POSSIBILITIES

*A. The Jews* - But someone may ask, "What would have happened if the Jews, as a nation, had repented, and accepted Jesus as King. Would the earthly Messianic Kingdom have been set up?" Certainly, but not necessarily immediately, for certain Old Testament prophecies as to Jesus' death and resurrection had to be fulfilled, for He had to die for

the redemption of the race before He could assume His office as King. But this could and would have been fulfilled by the Roman Government seizing Jesus and crucifying Him as a usurper, and with Jesus' Resurrection and Ascension, Daniel's 69th week would have terminated, and the 70th week begun without a break, At its close Jesus would have descended and set up His earthly Kingdom.

*B. The Church* - But you ask, "What about the Church? If it was God's eternal purpose to form the church (Eph. 1:4), how could it have been formed if there was no break or gap between Daniel's 69th and 70th week, and how therefore could there have been a 'bona fide' offer of an earthly Kingdom to Israel?" The question is hypothetical and based on the supposition that something might have happened that God foresaw would not happen. God's foreknowledge that the Jewish nation would not at that time heed the announcement that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand and repent does not mitigate against the sincerity of the announcement any more than the offer of spiritual salvation by a preacher of the Gospel to an audience of sinners who he has every reason to believe will refuse his offer, is not a sincere and "bona fide" offer.

### III. THE RECONCILIATION

God's plan and purpose in the Ages is based upon His foreknowledge. If God had not foreseen that the Jews would reject the King and therefore the Kingdom. He would have planned for the formation of the Church at some other time than this present Dispensation. As the Church was to be purchased by the precious blood of Christ (Acts 20:28, 1 Pet. 1:18-21), it was necessary that Jesus should be rejected and crucified, and that by His own nation, for the Prophet Zechariah (Zech. 12:10) foretold that the Jews should look upon Him whom they had pierced. But God's foreknowledge did not require or compel the Jewish nation to reject Jesus any more than Jesus' foreknowledge that Judas would betray Him compelled Judas to so do. The possibility of the Church being crowded out by the repentance of the Jewish nation did not enter into the "Plan of God," who foresaw the refusal of Israel to accept Jesus as King, and that Israel would not nationally repent until after the Church had been formed and taken out of the world.

In expounding the Scriptures we are not to take something that belongs to a "PAST" and a "FUTURE" Dispensation and put it in the "PRESENT" Dispensation. For instance, "THE KINGDOM." The "PAST" and "COMING" Dispensations have to do with "THE KINGDOM," but the "Present" has to do with the CHURCH. The "Kingdom" is an outward, visible and earthly "POLITICAL ORGANIZATION," and is to be "set up" on the earth (Dan. 2:44) while the "Church" is an invisible and heavenly "SPIRITUAL ORGANISM" that is to be "caught out" (1 Thess. 4:16-17.) The "Kingdom" was prepared FROM the "Foundation of the World." (Matt. 25:34) The "Church" was chosen in Him "BEFORE the Foundation of the World." (Eph. 1:4) The "Church" then is not the "Kingdom."

#### IV. THE CONCLUSION OF THE APOSTOLIC AGE

The Apostolic age came to a conclusion in harmony with the conclusion of the Apostolic signs. As the book of Acts is studied it is discovered that God slowly shuts down the signs in one place after another where the Jews reject the message. (Jerusalem - Acts 7: Asia Minor - Acts 13:45,46; European mainland - Acts 18:6; Rome - Acts 28:28). In (1 Cor. 1:22) the Jews require a sign, but by the time Paul comes to the end of his ministry he states "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek" (Rom. 10:12). As a matter of fact, Paul was not even able to heal his faithful friend Trophimus (2 Tim. 4:20) by the conclusion of his ministry.