

MESSIAH'S THRONE

The angel Gabriel told Mary that God would give her child *the throne of his father David* and he would reign over the house of Jacob forever. This is sufficient evidence that the Kingdom of God, the Messianic reign, will take place on Earth after Jesus' return. His kingdom will never end (Luke 1:32-33). Even if Mary was just a teenager, she would have understood those words as a promise that her son Jesus would reign over Israel from a throne in Jerusalem. The most satisfactory interpretation of Gabriel's statement is that after his return, the Messiah will reign over Israel during the Millennium. If not then, when will the Messiah reign over Israel?

Jesus promised his disciples that when he sits on his glorious throne in the new world, they would sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matt 19:28). The new world is a rebirth or regeneration of the world when the Messiah comes to reign. The saints will reign with him over the survivors of the Great Tribulation, the final seven years of this world's troubled history. The apostles will rule over a newly converted Israel, while other overcomers will rule elsewhere in the world. Jesus will give us the right to share his throne and to rule with him in the Millennium, just as he shares his Father's throne and rules with him (Rev 3:21).

The NT emphasizes the fact that after his resurrection, Jesus sat down at the right hand of God, where he is sharing God the Father's throne. It is significant that a man, Jesus, with a glorified human body, is now on the throne with his Father; humanity exalted to deity. In reality, God the Son never left this throne. Jesus told his disciples that he never did anything on his own initiative; he only did what he saw the Father doing. He even made the bold statement that whatever the Father does, he, the Son, also does. He is God and he reigns forever. Three times in John, Jesus uses the phrase 'where I am' to inform his disciples that even though he was with them in the world, he was still with the Father (John 12:26, 14:3, 17:24). Jesus was always very

conscious of the fact that he was one with the Father and of the glory that he had with him before the world began.

Another important throne passage is Matt 25:31 ff. When the Messiah returns in his glory and all the angels are with him, he will sit on his glorious throne from where he will judge the nations. The righteous will inherit the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world, while the unrighteous will be consigned to the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The separation of the sheep from the goats means that all mankind will be judged into two groups, the righteous and the wicked. The righteous will inherit the kingdom while the wicked will go away to eternal punishment.

The background to these verses is found in several Psalms which elaborate on God's promise to David in 2Sam 7:16 to establish *his throne* forever. In Psalm 2, God declares that he will set his regent on Zion, his holy hill. He will give him the nations as his inheritance and the ends of the earth as his possession. He will make him the highest of the kings of the earth and *his throne* will endure forever (Ps 89:27-29). The Lord will extend the Messiah's mighty scepter from Zion (Ps 110:2). Peter, preaching on the day of Pentecost, said that David was a prophet, and he knew that God had promised him on oath that he would put one of his descendants on *his throne*; Jesus, the promised Messiah

Isaiah prophesied that a child is born to us, a son given to us, and the government will be upon his shoulder. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on *David's throne and over his kingdom*, establishing it and upholding it forever (Isa 9:6-7). That is a prophecy about the Messiah's earthly throne.

John, in his vision (Rev 20:5-6), saw the martyrs who defied the Antichrist rising from the dead and reigning with the Messiah for a thousand years.

In Ezekiel's opening vision, he saw the Lord and his glory accompanied by the cherubim, the same living creatures that John describes (Rev 4). Later Ezekiel describes the glory of the Lord *leaving the temple* in Jerusalem, because of Israel's sin. It left via the East Gate and the Mount of Olives (Ezek 11:23). Later he saw the glory of the Lord *returning from the East* (Ezek 43). The sound of his

coming was like the roar of many waters, and the earth shone with the brilliance of his glory. The glory of the Lord *entered the temple* by the gate facing East and filled *the temple*. The glory of the Lord is equivalent to his presence. Ezekiel heard the Lord's voice speaking from *the temple* and telling him that this was the place of *his throne* and the place of the soles of his feet, where he would dwell among Israel forever (Ezek 43:7).

Ezekiel's vision of the return of the Lord to Jerusalem is nothing else but the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Zechariah tells us that on that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies East of Jerusalem (Zech 14:4). The East Gate, which faces the Mount of Olives, allows direct access to the temple but was sealed by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman in 1541. Jewish tradition believes that when the Messiah returns, he will enter Jerusalem via this gate. Ezekiel tells us that the sound of his coming will be like the sound of many waters, and the Earth will shine with his glory coming from the East (Ezek 43:2).

The prophet Malachi confirms that the Lord will suddenly come to *his temple*. He asks, who will be able to endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears (Mal 3:1-2). These verses clarify somewhat the events surrounding Jesus' return as the Messiah. He will reign on Earth from the temple in Jerusalem during the Millennium.

Our future reign with Christ on Earth should not be confused with our spiritual exaltation. God has already raised us with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realm. Sitting with Christ spiritually on God's throne is our present status (Eph 2:6). It is in anticipation of God showing us the incomparable riches of his grace and conferring on us kingship and authority to rule the Earth with Christ (Rev 5:10).

For how long will Jesus reign? Can his kingdom go on forever and ever, for eternity? Gabriel told Mary that Jesus would reign over Israel *forever* and that his kingdom would *have no end* (Luke 1:33). Daniel mentions many times that the Messiah's kingdom is everlasting and will never be destroyed (Dan 2:44, 7:14, 27). Those who are wise will shine like the stars forever and ever. His kingship will no doubt endure forever, but what of the earthly dominion? 1 Cor 15:24 tells of the Son handing the kingship back to the Father. This will happen on

judgment day after the Millennium, when the Earth and sky will flee from God's presence without leaving a trace. As that is the end of the world, the Messiah's kingship will pass from Son to Father so that the Father might have full authority over everything. However, the Son and the saints will continue to rule. As royal family, they have been promised eternal rule.

Several Scriptures indicate that the earth will perish, wear out like a garment, and pass away (Ps 102:25, quoted in Heb 1:11-12). Jesus stated that heaven and earth will pass away but his words will not (Matt 24:35). The creation is not eternal. In Hebrews 12:27 we are told that we will receive a kingdom that cannot be shaken. The sky and earth will wear out like a garment, God will roll them up like a robe, and like a garment, they will be changed. Is this annihilation or transformation? In Hebrews 12:26-27 the author quotes Haggai 2:6-7 about the removal of things that can be shaken so that things that cannot be shaken may remain, but the Haggai context is about God shaking all nations so that their treasures might fill the temple with glory. This is hardly an annihilation. Isaiah 34:4, 51:6 and 2 Pet 3:7, 10, 13 are ambiguous. Revelation 21:1 should be interpreted according to Isaiah's original concept of new heavens and new Earth which on a careful reading is obviously a transformation of the present Earth, resulting in the Millennium with a bright Holy City resting in the sky above the Middle East. There is no promise of a new physical creation.

The statement that the sea was no more should be interpreted figuratively as the turbulent nations (Rev 13:1, 20:13). Jesus will reign from sea to sea during the Millennium (Zech 9:10). The total physical creation will disappear (Matt 24:35, Rev 20:11) when the Messiah surrenders his earthly kingship to the Father. The redeemed will reign forever in New Jerusalem where there is no sun or night (Rev 22:5). Paul spoke about God's wisdom which he decreed before time began for our glory (1 Cor 2:9). He said nobody has seen or heard or imagined what it will be like. Theologians and scientists should know that the future will be bright for the redeemed but nobody knows the details.