***The Earthly Kingdom of Jesus Christ

RV95-02***

Please open your Bibles to Revelation 5. We want to continue to tie up this section. We are going to be looking at some of the most dramatic, important Scriptures throughout the Word of God that have an enormously important direct bearing upon the point in time in which you and I are living, and the immediate future for the people of this world. We are studying the seven-sealed scroll, and this is segment number four.

In Revelation 5:5, the apostle John has been moved to tears when it appears that there is no one to break the seven seals and read the scroll that is in the Father's hand. The rapture has taken place, so the church is in heaven. The 24 elders represent the church, and one of them directs John to stop crying, and to observe another prominent figure in the throne room. God the Father, of course, is on the throne. We have seen that God the Holy Spirit is present symbolically in seven flaming torches before the Father's throne.

**Jesus Christ**

Now, there is a third figure who is God the Son. He is identified in Revelation 5:5 as the Lion of the tribe of Judah and the root of King David. These are fitting descriptions since they relate to the role of Jesus Christ in the events which are recorded in the scroll. Jesus Christ is the rightful heir to the title deed to the earth (and that's what that scroll represents), which is held in the Father's hands. Therefore, as the rightful heir, He is entitled to break the seals.

**The Davidic Covenant**

These titles: the Lion of the tribe of Judah; and, the Root of David (which we looked at in detail in the previous session), refer to the promised Messiah King from the tribe of Judah and through the line of King David. The Davidic Covenant is found in 2 Samuel 7:1-16. In this covenant, David was promised an eternal throne; a house; and, a kingdom. The promises of this covenant are unconditional, and God goes to the trouble to make it clear that they are unconditional; that is, no matter what David's descendants do, this promise of an eternal throne; of an eternal house; and, of an eternal kingdom will never be abrogated. It will be fulfilled.

There's only one covenant that the Jews have with God which is a conditional one. That's the Mosaic covenant. That one has the word "if" in it, and the word "if" indicates that they must meet certain conditions before God is going to come through for them. In the Davidic Covenant, you do not find the word "if," because it is not dependent on anything that they do. It is dependent entirely upon the character of God.

So, the promises of this covenant are certain of being fulfilled. That's the important thing to realize. While it puts us in the minority position among churches to say that God is going to keep His Word and fulfill this covenant to David deliberately, nevertheless, that's the only way that you can take it. I think that before we're through with this session, you will be impressed all over again. These are areas of truth, as some of you know, but again, like someone said about the previous session, "I never knew that." You are going to be impressed all over again that the Bible is very clear as to where history is moving relative to who's going to run this world, and that in the immediate future.

**A Throne, a House, and a Kingdom**

So, these promises are made to David, and they are made relative to the Jewish nation which is descended from Abraham. The language of the Davidic Covenant indicates a literal earthly fulfillment. We saw that three important terms were used in that covenant. First was the word "thrones." That refers to a royal authority – the royal authority of David over Israel. That means a seat of government. God says that there will always be a seat of government for the final King in the Davidic line. Then He used the word "house." He promised an eternal house. That means the rule over Israel by a physical descendant of David; that is, a dynasty. There will always be a king in David's line to take the throne, which ultimately will be over the whole world. Then there was the word "kingdom." That refers to the political role of David over the nation Israel – the sphere of rule on this earth. So, this word indicates that there will always be an Israel. There will always be a Jewish nation. The throne refers to the royal authority – a seat of government; the house is a lineage, or a dynasty, or a descendant; and, the kingdom is a center of political rule – a nation itself to be ruled.

David understood the promises that were made to him as something that were related to the earth, and as something that was going to be forever. There was no other way that David would have taken those words because that, in their normal meaning, is what we would expect these things to be saying. So, just to refresh your mind, 2 Samuel 7:18-19: "Then David went in and sat before the Lord, and he said, 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house that You have brought me thus far? And this was yet a small thing in Your sight, O, Lord God. But You have spoken also of your servant's house for a great while to come. And is this the manner of man, O Lord God?" David is awed by the promises which have been given to him. He says, "Who am I that you have made such enormous promises to me relative to my family for all eternity?"

2 Samuel 7:25: "And now, O Lord God, the word that You have spoken concerning your servant, and concerning his house, establish it forever, and do as You have said." There's no indication there that David thought anything but in actual literal terms – that he was actually going to have a dynasty (a house) that was going to last forever. Then verse 29: "Therefore, now, let it please You to bless the house of Your servant, that it may continue forever before You. For You, O Lord God, have spoken it, and with Your blessing, let the house of Your servant be blessed forever." There's no other conclusion that we can reach as we read those Scriptures, except that David viewed this entirely in a literal sense. He did not think of some kind of a spiritual kingdom.

**Conclusions of the Davidic Covenant**

So, there are certain conclusions that we must reach, and to put right up front, from the Davidic Covenant:

1. **A Nation**

If God is going to fulfill what He has promised to do in this covenant, then the Jews have to be preserved as a nation forever. God certainly has done that.

1. **The Promised Land**

If God is going to fulfill the covenant to David, Israel must be brought into the Promised Land: to be there at the future Second Coming of Christ; and, to be there in belief. That has already begun in our day. It was a dramatic thing in 1948 when that factor (that necessity) was begun to be fulfilled. The ultimate gathering of the Jews has not taken place. That will be when God himself (the Messiah Himself) gathers them from all over the world, and they come in in belief. The Jew in the land of Israel today is there in unbelief.

1. **The Return of Jesus Christ**

David's son, Jesus Christ will have to return bodily and literally to reign over the future Davidic kingdom on this earth. That's a necessity if this covenant is to be fulfilled. The final one in the line (the only one now existing in the dynasty of David) has to come back literally to rule over this earth from Jerusalem if this covenant is to be fulfilled.

1. **A Literal Earthly Kingdom**

Jesus Christ must reign over a literal earthly kingdom, not merely some heavenly kingdom. You cannot spiritualize this. He not only has to come back to this earth, but He has to rule over an actual governmental situation (an entity) here on this earth.

1. **An Eternal Kingdom**

This kingdom will be an eternal kingdom on earth under Jesus Christ as the Lord our righteousness.

So, it is the Lord Jesus Christ who is the eternal fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant. This means that Jesus Christ must rule over the earth as David's greater Son; He must rule from an earthly throne, and it must be centered in the city of Jerusalem; and, the Jewish people must be in their land as the kingdom over which He rules. This is all going to take place in the millennial kingdom – the 1,000-year reign of Christ upon this earth, after He returns to this earth a second time.

What this certainly does not mean is that Jesus Christ will fulfill this, or has been fulfilling this, in some way, by sitting upon his Father's throne in heaven, exercising some spiritual reign over the church on earth. That is what the vast majority of churches teach – that Jesus Christ is fulfilling this Davidic Covenant by reigning from heaven, where He is seated on his Father's throne over the church (the spiritual body of Christ) here on this earth. But the only way you can reach a conclusion like that is that you have to take all the statements we've read in 2 Samuel 7, and say, "Those words absolutely do not mean what they say. Those words must be used as symbols for a spiritual idea." Once you've done that, you've destroyed all meaning of the Word of God.

So, let's look now in a few places in the Old Testament to see whether there has been a confirmation of this kingdom as an earthly literal kingdom. Turn to Psalm 89:3-4: "I have made a covenant with My chosen. I have sworn unto David, My servant, 'I will establish your seed forever, and build up your throne to all generations.'"

Psalm 89:29: "I will also make his seed to endure forever in his throne as the days of heaven. If his children forsake My Law, and do not walk in My ordinances, and if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, then I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless, My loving kindness I will not utterly take from them, nor allow My faithfulness to fail. I will not break My covenant, nor will I alter the thing that has gone out of My lips. I have sworn once by My Holiness that I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me. It shall be established forever like the moon, and as a faithful witness in heaven."

I don't have to explain those words to you. All you have to do is read them yourself, and you can see what God is saying. In this Psalm, God is reiterating that He has made promises to David concerning an earthly kingdom which will last forever, and that God has sworn by His Own integrity, and by His Own holiness, to execute this promise. Therefore, nothing will stand in the way of fulfilling such a kingdom upon this earth.

As this kingdom is described in the Old Testament, you'll discover that it is a kingdom that is worldwide. The Jew is the leading nation, and the Messiah is the ruler. All the nations of the world (all the gentiles of the world) look to Jerusalem for instruction concerning God, and all the nations of the world gravitate toward Jerusalem in order to find spiritual enlightenment. When in the history of the world has that ever happened? The only way you can try to make that something that has happened in the past is to spiritualize the whole thing, and say that, as people look to the Bible, they are looking to the Jews who wrote the Bible, so they are looking to them in that way for spiritual enlightenment. That's certainly not the feeling you get at all when you read Psalm 89.

**Literal Fulfillment**

These divine promises must be understood here in a literal sense. The Scripture declares clearly that the covenant with David deals with his physical seed; with his physical family; and, with his physical rule over the earth. There is no indication that David's kingdom here is a spiritual entity such as the church is; nor, that his throne is the throne of God in heaven.

Please remember that we learned in Revelation 3:21 that Jesus Christ is not seated on His Own throne now. He is in heaven seated upon His Father's throne. He has a throne. But the throne of Jesus Christ is the throne of King David here on this earth. It's totally different.

Move over to Isaiah 9:6-7: "For onto us a child is born. Unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder." This is speaking about the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ: "And His name shall be called Wonderful; Counselor; the Mighty God; the everlasting Father; and, the Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace, there shall be no end. Upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it, with justice and with righteousness from henceforth, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of Hosts will perform this." The zeal of "YHWH" (of the armies) will perform this. I don't have to explain those words to you. You just read them, and those words are again reiterating a very literal earthly kingdom promised to David and to his descendant, the Messiah King, and that this will be a kingdom of justice and of righteousness. And this is speaking about a kingdom which will be functioning worldwide.

**Jeremiah**

The fulfillment of this promise is, furthermore, to be forever. It is total nonsense to suggest that this is being fulfilled in this age of the church. In Jeremiah 23:5-6, the prophet says, "'Behold, the day is come,' says the Lord, 'that I will raise unto David a righteous branch (that is, Jesus Christ), and the King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth (not in Heaven). In His days, Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely (the northern and southern parts of the divided kingdom). This is his name whereby he shall be called the Lord our righteousness;'" that is God, "YHWH," our absolute righteousness.

So, the son of David, who in time will rule over this earthly kingdom, and will exercise justice and righteousness over the whole earth, will Himself be God. He will Himself be God. He is going to be our Jehovah – our absolute righteousness. You can't squeeze any spiritual heavenly church concept in that at all. The reign of a descendant from David is described, and at this time, Israel and Judah are born again, and they will be dwelling safely when this happens. They are not dwelling safely now.

Notice Jeremiah 23:7-8: "'Therefore, behold, the day is come,' says the Lord, that they shall no more say, 'The Lord lives who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt,' but the Lord lives who brought up and who led the seed of the House of Israel out of the north country, and from all the countries to which I had driven them. And they shall dwell in their own land.'"

The point of verse 7 is that whatever the Jews looked back to an example of the power of God working upon them as a nation, the greatest demonstration of the power of God was when they were being led out of Egypt, and they were brought to the Red Sea, and the sea opened, and God led them through safely. Whenever they wanted to think back about an example of the power of God upon them as a nation, that's what they would look back to. For us as Christians, we have a frame of reference of the demonstration of the power of God also. But the power of God that the New Testament sets forth, as the basis of our frame of reference, is the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. That's the most enormous demonstration of divine power – that God could take Christ and raise him from the dead. That could not have been done had He not been sinless, and had the sins of the world not been completely borne by Him, so that God's divine justice was satisfied.

So, the prophet Jeremiah said, "Now, when we talk about how great God's power is, we point back to the Red Sea. We point back to that time that He led us across, in that desperate moment when we thought we were doomed, as we stood on the shore there. Suddenly, the wind comes up, and the sea parts, and we go across on dry land. That was power, and we always point back to that. But in the future, we're going to have a new frame of reference for power. That is going to be the fact that in the millennial kingdom, the Jewish nation exists as a nation that God has gathered from all over the world, from whence they had been scattered. From everywhere, the Jewish nation will again be in existence in its own land." And that does take some enormous power, and of course, that power has already been existing for all these thousands of years, such that the Jews should still survive as Jews and as a distinctive nation. You can tell them, and you can distinguish them. They are identifiable. No other nation on the face of the earth has ever existed like that. No other racial group has ever existed like that. So, there is evidence already that indeed the power of God is working to preserve them, and that is going to be what they refer back to in the future.

Now, the amillennials (in contrast to we premillennials) believe that all of these promises to Israel must be spiritualized and applied to the church. The promised regathering here of Israel from all the countries of the world is interpreted as being the out-calling of the church from the world. Now, indeed, that is exactly what God is doing. I don't want to take time right now to be reading all of these Scriptures. I'll just refer them to you. But what these Scriptures declare is that God is calling out a special people for His name from among the gentiles. That special group of people is known as the church (the body of Christ), which is to be uniquely related to Jesus Christ as His consort as He rules from his throne in Jerusalem. Every one of you here right now who are born-again in the body of Christ will be associated with Him in this millennial kingdom in some position of ruling authority. That is true. He is calling out a people for a particular mission. That's what the church is all about. Titus 2:13-14 tell us that; 1 Peter 2:9-10 tell us; and, Ephesians 1:22-23 tell us that.

The amillennialists say that that calling out of the church in this age is the fulfillment of what Jeremiah is referring to when he talks about the Jews being regathered: "The execution of justice and righteousness in the land." And of course, you know how the Jews understood that. When the prophet said, "The execution of justice and righteousness in the land," the land only meant one thing to them. It was the land of promise – that which had been promised to Abraham. The amillennialist, however, says that that means God's rule in heaven. Heaven is the land – not on earth.

You must understand that you are in a minority position. Other churches will laugh in your face if you tell them what I just told you here. They will totally ridicule that and reject that as being total nonsense. They will tell you that the Jew doesn't have a chance. The nations of the world sooner or later are going to finish the Jew off. He is never going to be the leading nation in the world. They will tell you that when Christ returns, He will return only to establish a spiritual eternity – not to establish some earthly kingdom. For you to say that, you say you must take words like the prophet Jeremiah has declared, and totally dismiss them from their normal meanings.

Jeremiah 30:8-11: "'For it shall come to pass in that day,' says the Lord of Hosts, 'that I will break his yoke from off your neck, and will burst your bonds, and strangers shall no more enslave them. But they shall serve the Lord their God, and David their King, whom I will raise up onto them (I will resurrect from the dead). Therefore, fear not, O my servant Jacob,' says the Lord, 'neither be dismayed, O Israel, for, lo, I will save you from afar, and your seed from the land of their captivity, and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest and be quiet, and none shall make him afraid. For I am with you,' says the Lord, 'to save you, though I make a full end of all nations (the gentile nations) to which I have scattered you. Yet, I will not make a full end of you, but I will correct you in measure, and will not leave you altogether unpunished.'"

You can figure that out for yourself. You know exactly what the prophet is saying. It refers here again to the reign of King David, very specifically here in the millennial kingdom. King David is to be resurrected, and he will be associated with Jesus Christ in the rule over Israel. The context here is that this is going to take place at a time when the Jews are brought back to their homeland, and when they will no longer be afraid. Verse 10 says that they will be in rest: "They will be quiet, and none shall make them afraid."

Now, you tell me when, in the history of the human race, have the Jews ever been in their homeland since the time that Jeremiah spoke, and they have been at peace; at rest; and, unafraid? I guarantee you that they're not that today. They are very much afraid. They never know when the next moment is going to be a moment of disaster for them if they are attacked by a power that's greater than they can handle. Certainly, this has not been fulfilled. Israel is not free of gentile oppression. But that's what Jeremiah is describing – a time when God is going to end their being scattered all over the world. There are Jews scattered all over the world today. That scattering hasn't been terminated. God has not gathered all the Jews back into the Promised Land, but that's what's going to happen. That's exactly what Jeremiah is saying.

He does say, "I'll correct you, and I'll discipline you," which is what God is doing. But again, he indicates that He'll never abandon them, and He will keep His Word to David. The whole prophecy clearly refers to a future earthly condition, and that is the millennial (1,000-year) reign of Christ here on this earth.

Jeremiah 33:14: "'Behold, the day is come,' says the Lord, 'that I will behold that good thing which I promised unto the house of Israel and unto the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, I will cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David, and He shall execute justice and righteousness in the land.'" There you have that same term again that John heard in heaven, describing Jesus Christ as "the root of David," the stem – the bud out of the branch.

Verse 16: "In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely. This is the name by which she shall be called: the Lord our righteousness. For thus says the Lord, 'David shall never lack a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel.'" How is God going to fulfill that? "David shall never lack a man to sit upon the throne of the house of Israel." That is a house which has been promised, and which Jews have been told would be one that will last eternally. It is a dynasty that's always going to be there. There is a throne, a seat of authority, that's always going to be there. How is God going to fulfill this? There's only one way that He could fulfill this. It has never been fulfilled. If God is going to keep His Word, there's only one way that could happen, and that is through Jesus Christ. He's the only existing, rightful, authorized descendant of David who has the right to the throne. That's why He is the only one who can break the seals on that scroll in the Father's hand. Only He has the right, because what is inside that scroll describes how God fulfills the promises to David. This is tremendous.

The whole prophecy refers to an earthly scene. The context here deals with the full restoration of the Jewish nation, a king and a dynasty of David executing justice and righteousness in the Jew's homeland. They will always have a man sitting upon this throne. This condition doesn't exist today, and it is not the heavenly throne of God the Father that Revelation 3:21 speaks of. This is a throne here upon the earth.

**Ezekiel**

Ezekiel 37 is another Old Testament confirmation of the Davidic Covenant. Ezekiel 37:22: "And I will make them one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel. One king shall be their king to them all. They shall no more be two nations. Neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms anymore at all." The Jews are to be made one nation again. The split kingdom will be resolved.

Verse 23: "Neither shall they defile themselves anymore with their idols, nor with their detestable things, nor with any of their transgressions, but I will save them out of all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them, so they shall be My people and I will be their God." The Lord says, "I'm going to clean up the Jewish people internally, so that they no longer want to worship idol gods, and so they will indeed be my people, and I will truly be their God. And David, my servant, shall be king over them." This is the resurrected David in the millennium. "And they all shall have one shepherd, and they shall also walk in My ordinances and observe My statutes, and do them. They shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob." Is that heaven? Is that the land that the Jews are going to dwell in? That is obviously the Promised Land: "Jacob, My servant, in which your father's have dwelt." That makes it very clear: "And they shall dwell in it, even they, and their children, and their children's children forever. And My servant David shall be their prince forever."

David has been dead for 400 years here, folks, when Ezekiel wrote this. And here he's talking about David being a leader and a king over a united Jewish kingdom forever? Well, obviously, this was a future fulfillment, which has not yet taken place. They are going to be in the land that their father's dwelt in. The only land that the Jewish people ever dwelt in was the land promised to Abraham, from the Euphrates to the Nile. Very clearly, again, this is a literal earthly fulfillment.

Hosea 3:4-5: "For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim. Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the Lord their God and David their King, and shall fear the Lord and His goodness in the latter days." Here the prophet Hosea predicts the period when the Jewish nation would have no reigning king. This would be a time when the Jewish people will not have a king. That is the period of human history in which the Jew finds himself today.

This is what was in the back of the mind of the Lord Jesus Christ on the occasion which is recorded in Matthew 23:37-39, when He wept over the city of Jerusalem, and the hard, stiff-neck resistance of the Jews to Him as their Messiah: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you kill the prophets, and stone them who are sent unto you. How often I would have gathered My children together even as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not. Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, you shall not see Me henceforth till you shall say, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,'" referring directly to Jesus Christ.

Jesus said to the Jewish people that there would be a time when they would not have a king: "Their house is left to them desolate." He said that they will not even see Him again until the time comes when they will praise and welcome Jesus of Nazareth, whom they now despise. All of the Jews, from Menachem Begin on down, despise Jesus Christ. The Bible tells us that the time will come that those who survive and are brought back to the land will praise the Lord Jesus Christ, and will rejoice in the fact that He is their Messiah. Jesus wept over the fact that it was necessary for them to be without a king as Hosea had predicted.

Zechariah 14:4: "And His feet shall stand that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley. And half of the mountain shall move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. When Jesus Christ does return, His Second Coming is going to be specifically on the Mount of Olives. It was a great thrill to me to stand on that mount, and look across the Kidron Valley toward the city of Jerusalem, and realize that we were on the very spot where the feet of Jesus will someday touch again, and the whole mount is going to split in two, and it's going to be a real dramatic entrance. That's one thing the Lord knows how to do. He knows how to make a real big dramatic entrance. That is going to be dramatic.

Zechariah 14:9: "And the Lord shall be king over all the earth. In that day, there shall be one Lord, and His name one." Now, when has Jesus Christ ever come; touched upon the Mount of Olives; and, become one Lord over all the earth? That is something in the future. It's a promise that will be the fulfillment of the promises to David concerning a house; a kingdom; and, a throne.

**Mary**

The New Testament is full of confirmation of this same Davidic covenant relative to an earthly kingdom. Let's start with Luke 1:30-33, where Mary discovers that she is going to bear this boy. Here's a verse that cause the amillennialists to twist and squirm. They find it very uncomfortable because, again, its words are very clear, especially now with the background of the Old Testament passages that we have read. Remember that Mary knew all of those Scriptures. Mary had all of those Old Testament understandings in her mind. And from that frame of reference, put yourself in her place, and ask yourself, "Exactly what do you think she thought when she heard these words?"

Luke 1:30: "The angel said to her, 'Do not fear, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest, and the Lord God shall give onto Him the throne of His father David. And He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom, there shall be no end."

Mary was to have a Son. He was to be called the Son of the Highest, which indicates that He was not only going to be a human being, but He was also going to be God. Therefore, she was going to bear a God-man. God the Father will give His Son Jesus the throne of David. Jesus Christ will reign over the Jewish nation forever. This earthly kingdom of David will last forever. Those words were very clear to Mary. She didn't think about heaven when she heard that He would reign over the house of Jacob forever. She didn't think about heaven when she heard the words that His kingdom would last forever, and that there would be no end to it. She didn't think about a throne in heaven when she heard that her baby God-man was going to be the ruler on David's throne. She knew exactly what that meant. Her mind just flew back 2 Samuel 7, and she clicked it all together with all those Old Testament passages. She knew what the expectation and the hope of the Jewish people was. And she knew very clearly what it was that was being said to her.

So, that's how she would have understood the angel's message. Mary would never have understood these things in non-literal terms. God, I can assure you, on the basis of my intimate relationships with Him and His integrity, would not have used terminology which would have deceived Mary. He just wouldn't have done that. He would not have talked to her in language that so clearly conveyed something other than what He meant – if what He was talking about was a spiritual kingdom, and deliberately gave Mary the wrong impression.

**James and John**

Matthew 20:20: "Then came to Him (that is, to Jesus) the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshiping Him, and desiring a certain thing. He said to her, 'What do you want?' She said unto Him, 'Grant that these, my two sons, may sit: the one on Your right hand; and, the other on the left in Your kingdom.' But Jesus answered and said, 'You don't know what you are asking. Are you able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?' They said unto Him, 'We are able," And He said to them, "You shall drink indeed of My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with. But to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared by My Father."

The mother of James and John was asking for a place of honor in the kingdom that Jesus was going to set up – a place of honor on the right and the left hand of the throne. She was not asking for a place for her sons at the Father's throne in heaven. That is self-evident. Jesus refused her request because He said that it was up to the Father to grant such a request, and He could not do it. He did not say to her, "Mother, there isn't any such throne. There isn't any such honor. There isn't any such place for your sons to sit at." Instead, He said, "I understand what you're asking. I understand your motherly ambition for your sons. What you're asking for is something that somebody will get. Of these 12, two of them are going to have it. But it's not Mine to give – to select which two it is. That will be My Father." He didn't say that such a place and such a kingdom did not exist.

This request, of course, may have originated with the mother from the promise of Jesus to His disciples in Matthew 19:28, indicating that they would be reigning with Him on thrones in an earthly kingdom, and that these disciples would have a part of the King's government. Again, that would be very misleading language if that didn't mean an actual earthly kingdom.

Luke 22:29 is another passage confirming the Davidic Kingdom as a literal earthly kingdom: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom as My Father has appointed unto Me, that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones, judging the 12 tribes of Israel." This was said the night before His crucifixion, even after the Jewish nation had rejected Him as the Messiah. The next day, He would die on the cross. Even at this point, He was still talking about an earthly kingdom, and He was repeating the kingdom promises to David, and their literal reality in that His disciples would be reigning in the kingdom.

Acts 1:6-7 records the moment that Jesus is about to ascend to heaven: "When they, therefore, were come together, they asked of Him, saying, 'Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?'" The disciples asked, "Now that resurrection is past; the crucifixion is past; and, the sins of the world have been paid for, Jesus, is this the point in time when You're going to fulfill the promise to David, and when you're going to set up the earthly kingdom?" Now, if there was no such kingdom in the future, what should Jesus have done at this point? In all integrity, there was only one thing He could have done. He would have had to correct their serious misconceptions. A few minutes later, He's moving up out of their sight, and going to heaven. This was the time, if ever there was a time, for that misconception of an earthly kingdom to be corrected, if they were in error on that.

Verse 7: "He said unto them, 'It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father has put in His own power." What Jesus did was to tell them that the promise would be literally fulfilled, but it was a secret as to when. They wanted to know, "When are Daniel's final seven years going to start clicking off the clock? When are things going to start shaping up toward the end?" And he said, "That's for the Father to know." Instead, Jesus goes on in verse 8, and tells them what they should now be preoccupied with. A new age (a secret age) is going to be introduced – the age of the church. A secret thing is going to be done which was a mystery in the Old Testament. It was never revealed – the calling out from Jew and gentile of a special group of people called "the church:" "But you shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you (which was on the day of Pentecost), and you shall be witnesses unto Me both unto Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

What Jesus said to them was that the power of the Holy Spirit would come upon them to enable them to execute worldwide evangelism in proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God. When the church body was complete (when the last believer was won and added to that body), then the church would be removed, and the kingdom age would be introduced. So, the kingdom of Jesus Christ, as David Son, promised in the Old Testament, and to his mother, Mary, has been postponed, but not canceled, and certainly not spiritualized.

Acts 15:14: "And Simeon has declared how God first did visit the nations to take out of them a people for His name. And to this agree the words of the prophets as it is written: 'After this, I will return and will build again the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. And I will build again its ruins, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the nations upon whom My name is called,' says the Lord, who does all these things. Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the age."

At this point in the early New Testament church, there was a discussion concerning the status of gentiles in the church. Were they equal to the Jews? Did they have to come under the Jewish system and keep all the Jewish customs, etc.? The Old Testament clearly proclaimed that in the kingdom that was promised to David, the Jews would have the preeminence. They were unclear, now, in this new thing (the church), how to relate Jew and gentile together. Who was to be top banana? And James gets up and delivers a solution from the Spirit of God.

He is referring to Amos 9:11-12. We won't go into that extensively, but the expression "after this I will return" refers to the return of Jesus Christ to the earth after a period of gentile preeminence. That began in 606 B.C. when the Jews were taken into Babylonian captivity. Since that time, the gentiles have run things. What James says is that Amos 9:11-12 says that this judgment on the Jewish nation, of scattering them among the nations of the world, is going to come to an end. After that scattering terminates, at the Second Coming of Christ, then God is again going to rebuild what He calls the tent of David, the tabernacle of David, which refers to the political power and dominion of David on this earth. The rebuilding is the restoration of the kingdom to Israel after the church age. That is not the present church age. Amos 9:14-15 confirm that the church is not the fulfillment of the kingdom promised to David and to Israel.

The Kingdom deals with rule over the Jews in their ancient land. You cannot apply that to the church. It deals with restoration at a time of spiritual revival. That's what "rebuilding the tent of David" means. The Jews have never come to a spiritual revival where they recognize Christ. The kingdom era relates to the Jews regathered in their own homeland. That was all future to Amos's day. It is still future in its complete fulfillment. The divine order is judgment on Israel, then blessing on Israel. In Romans 11, we are told that Israel is going to be grafted back into the place of blessing from which it was once broken off in order to discipline the nation – a place of blessing now held by the gentiles.

So, that's a passage which we just skimmed over. There's a great deal more in that. But basically what James said was: the fact that there is something different – that Jews and gentiles are on equal ground, is indeed the case now. That fits exactly with the prophet Amos, because the time of our preeminence as Jews is going to come after we have been brought together under our Messiah, and then we come to preeminence. James said that the Messiah is in heaven. We are in a totally different operation now. We are here to call, from Jews and gentiles together, those who will believe in Christ and become members of His body.

Revelation 20:4 is a condition on earth, in the future, when Satan is bound in the pit of the abyss. He is removed from the earth. The church saints are ruling over the earth: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them, and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the Word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands, and they lived and reign with Christ 1,000 years." And this is the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, which is the fulfillment of the promise to David of bringing in a throne; a house; and, a kingdom which will last forever.

It is during this 1,000-year reign upon the earth, with you Christians assisting Jesus Christ in that reign, that the covenant to David will be fulfilled. Jesus Christ is in heaven as the final descendant of the Davidic line; as the Lion of the tribe of Judah – the King; and, as the root from David – the one descended in that family line. When He breaks those seals in heaven, terrible things will begin happening on the earth during the last three-and-a-half years of the tribulation. But those things will usher in this 1,000-year kingdom. And they will set up Christ on this earth to be the ruler of all the world.

As John thinks about that, he becomes so excited that in the closing of the book of the Revelation, in Revelation 22:20, he says, "Even so, come Lord Jesus." He looks forward to that millennial kingdom, and he says, "Lord, Go! Move it. I'm ready." And of course, it's an exciting thing to realize that Jesus is identified by John by the relationship to the Davidic covenant, and that that is important to us. We are part of that. That's exactly why that was called to his attention, because John is part of that church with us. Rejoice in the marvelous future that you and I have.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1982

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