

The Kingdom Controversy

Douglas Cox

October 5, 2012

Contents

The Kingdom Controversy	2
Dispensationalism and the eyes of our understanding	2
On the throne and key of David	3
Christ's reign of peace	5
Which Jerusalem remains forever?	7
Was David's throne raised up?	9
Jesus, King of the Jews	10
What is the land of Christ's kingdom?	12
A royal priesthood	15
I reap where I did not sow	17
Many days without a king	19
They shall no more be pulled up out of their land, Amos 9:15	21
Is the throne of David a type?	23
When will Israel's kingdom be restored?	23
David's throne in Acts 2:29-36	26
Was the kingdom offered to the Jews?	28
James and the tabernacle of David	30

The Kingdom Controversy

Copyright © 2012 by Douglas E. Cox
For updated versions of this file go to:
<http://tcc.customer.sentex.ca/dload/TKC.pdf>

Dispensationalism and the eyes of our understanding

Isaiah said the mountain of the Lord's house would be raised up, and established in the tops of the mountains, above the hills. [Isaiah 2:2] This was fulfilled, when Jesus ascended to heaven, to the throne of God, where he reigns over all.

In Acts 15:16, James applied a prophecy in Amos 9:11 about *the tabernacle of David*, that was addressed to Israel, to the New Testament church. Many consider this scripture to be a serious problem for dispensationalism. In fact, it may be argued, that *by quoting this prophecy in Acts 15, James identified the church with the tabernacle of David, which throttles dispensationalism!*

Prophecies about *Judah, Jerusalem, and Israel* may apply to the church, in a spiritual sense, because Isaiah's prophecy that the mountain of the Lord's house would be raised up, and established in the tops of the mountains, was fulfilled, when Jesus ascended to heaven. Why else would Jesus have said, "salvation is of the Jews"? [John 4:22] and why else would Isaiah say Jerusalem's walls are named "Salvation"? [Isaiah 26:1; 60:18] why else would the author of Hebrews say, "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem"? [Hebrews 12:22] why else would Paul say, "For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh"? [Philippians 3:3]

Isaiah's prophecy links the earthly Jerusalem, and Israel, with the church of the New Testament. David reigned in Jerusalem, over all Israel. Jesus inherited David's throne. [Acts 2:30-33] The idea that Jerusalem was raised up, implies a continuity between the Jerusalem of the Old Testament prophets and the church of the New Testament, which is the Jerusalem above, and the "mother of us all." [Galatians 4:26]

Paul said in his letter to the Ephesians, that he prayed that "the eyes of your understanding" will be enlightened. This would hardly be necessary, if the premises of dispensationalism were valid. These demand that the literal, superficial meaning of the scriptures is preferred, over the hidden, spiritual meaning, that requires interpretation, and *enlightenment* from God. Paul prayed "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom

and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." [Ephesians 1:17-18]

The source of our enlightenment is Christ. By nature, men are unable to comprehend the things of God. Paul said, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." [1 Corinthians 2:14]

Paul said he prayed that the Ephesian saints would know "what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." [Ephesians 1:19-23]

The earthly Jerusalem, according to Paul, corresponds to Hagar, the bondwoman who was cast out of Abraham's house. [Galatians 4:24-26] Isaiah said every mountain will be made low, and the earthly mount Zion was one of those mountains made low, when the truth of the gospel was revealed.

Jesus has been raised up to God's throne; those who are in Christ are raised up too; Paul said we "sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." He wrote: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." [Ephesians 2:4-6]

To the world, and even to many Christians, the church does not appear to be raised up, and men do not see believers sitting in heavenly places; this is only perceived by faith, which comes from God. Unless Jesus opens the eyes of our understanding, we do not see it.

1. On the throne and key of David

On the Web page: "When and Where Does Christ Sit Upon the Throne of David?"¹ George Zeller argues against the idea that Christ is now reigning on the throne of David. Zeller believes that Christ's reign will occur in the future, upon the earth, not in heaven.

¹<http://www.middletonbiblechurch.org/dispen/davidthr.htm>

Zeller is the assistant pastor at The Middletown Bible Church, and the author of most of the articles on the church's website. In the 1st of 15 items in the article he wrote:

“The LORD hath sworn in truth unto DAVID; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon THY (DAVID’S) THRONE. If thy children will keep My covenant and My testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon THY THRONE for evermore” (Psalm 132:11-12).

The passage above speaks of David’s throne. Where will David’s throne be located?

“For the LORD hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. There will I make the HORN OF DAVID to bud: I have ordained a lamp for Mine anointed (Psalm 132:13,17).

David’s throne will be located in Zion (Jerusalem), not in the third heaven. It is there in Zion that God will cause the horn of David to spring up.

Isaiah said, “The Lord is exalted; for he dwelleth on high: he hath filled Zion with judgment and righteousness.” [Isaiah 33:5]

Isaiah said that God “dwelleth on high;” yet Psalm 132:13 says he has “chosen Zion for His habitation.” How does he dwell on high, *and* in Zion, *unless* Zion is somehow *raised up*?

Zion must have been raised up, because Hebrews 12:22 says, “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem;” mount Zion is the “mountain of the Lord’s house” that was *established in the top of the mountains*, and *exalted above the hills*, as Isaiah foretold, in Isaiah 2:2. It was raised up when Jesus ascended to heaven, after his resurrection. Paul said the saints are also raised up together, and “sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” [Ephesians 2:6]

David’s throne is associated with the “key” of David, which like a throne, was a symbol of authority. In ancient times the keys were large, and were displayed prominently by officials, hanging around the neck. To possess the key to a house, would be like possessing the throne of a kingdom.

Jesus said that he possesses the key of David, which is equivalent to saying he possesses the throne of David.

Revelation 3:7

And to the angel of the church in Philadelphia write; These things

saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth;

This is a quote from Isaiah 22:22, which refers to Eliakim the son of Hilkiah; “And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open.”

The mountain of the Lord’s house was raised up, far above all earthly hills, to heaven. Isaiah 2:2 was fulfilled when Jesus ascended to heaven. And since Jesus was born of the line of David, and inherited the throne of David his father, David’s throne was established in heaven also. [Luke 1:32]

Dispensationalists do not comprehend this; only when Jesus opens their minds are they able to comprehend it. This is likely an example of what Jesus meant, when he said of himself, that he is the one that “openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.” The minds of some people are opened, by Jesus, while the minds of others are closed to spiritual truths.

2. Christ’s reign of peace

In the 2nd of 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, George Zeller claims that the trouble and warfare in the present world means that Christ is not reigning, as his reign is to be a reign of peace. Zeller wrote:

“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 judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:7).

What will conditions be like when the Messiah sits on the throne of David? At that time the earth’s government will be upon His shoulders (Isaiah 9:6) and the earth will enjoy peace as the Prince of Peace sits upon David’s throne. Such conditions are certainly not found during this present church age.

John wrote:

Revelation 19:11

And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat

upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.

His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.

This figure can be none other than Christ. And among his many crowns, there is one that represents his position as head of the church, and king of Israel, reigning in the heavenly Jerusalem, on the throne of David.

Jesus promised peace to the saints, but in the same verse, he promised they would have tribulation.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

Those who are against the heavenly Jerusalem, the church of Christ, which is "the city of the great King," and the light of the world, become blind like the blind horses in Zechariah 12:4.

Zechariah 12:4

In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

In Zechariah's prophecy, the horses who are smitten with blindness are probably symbolic of those with no understanding. [Psalm 32:9] The house of Judah, like the house of David, stands for the people of God.

Jesus Christ has been given all power in heaven and earth. [Matthew 28:18] This must include the throne of David. But because of their spiritual blindness, many deny it.

Psalm 103:19

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

Paul said that everything in heaven and earth will eventually be brought under Christ and reconciled to him. Those who are in Christ find rest, and have become a new creation.

Colossians 1:19-23 NIV

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

3. Which Jerusalem remains forever?

The 3rd of 15 scriptures discussed in this article by George Zeller, refers to Jeremiah's prophecy that Jerusalem would remain *forever*. But that was not true of the earthly city, which was destroyed completely in the war with the Romans in 70 AD. Zeller wrote:

Jeremiah 17:25

Then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the THRONE OF DAVID, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of JERUSALEM: and this city shall remain for ever

The only way to get to David's throne is by way of the gates of the city of Jerusalem (see also verses 19-24).

Jesus said, "I am the door of the sheep." [John 10:7] "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture." [vs. 9]

In prophecy, the city of Jerusalem represents salvation, and the kingdom of God. Jesus said it is "the city of the great King." [Matthew 5:35] Its gates are symbolic; Isaiah said, "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." [Isaiah 26:1]

Isaiah's strong city is no longer the earthly city, but is now the heavenly one. The earthly city was destroyed in a holocaust by the Romans in 70 AD. If the earthly city was meant in Isaiah's prophecy, no doubt God would have saved it from destruction. But after Jesus ascended to heaven the Jerusalem to which prophecy applies is the heavenly one, as Jerusalem and mount Zion were raised up, as foretold in Isaiah 2:2.

Isaiah 60:18

Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders; but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise.

There was no safety in the earthly city in 70 AD, nor has there been since then. The heavenly city is defended by God, and he builds its walls.

Psalms 51:18

Do good in thy good pleasure unto Zion: build thou the walls of Jerusalem.

God builds Jerusalem, but this is not true of the earthly city.

Psalms 147:2

The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

The walls of the heavenly city have 12 gates and the angels at the gates have the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel written on them. Each one is a pearl.

Revelation 21:10-12

And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,

Having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal;

And had a wall great and high, and had twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and names written thereon, which are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel:

Access to the holy city, and God's kingdom, is the "pearl of great price" in the parable of Jesus. Dwelling there pictures dwelling in Christ.

The Jerusalem and temple that were destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD were not the Jerusalem and temple spoken of in Isaiah's prophecies.

Isaiah 33:20

Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken.

Who would claim that this prophecy applies to the earthly city? It would make nonsense of God's word. But when applied to the heavenly city, that was raised up, when Jesus ascended to heaven, the prophecy is perfectly valid. The following verse confirms this:

Isaiah 33:21

But there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.

Isaiah clearly showed that the broad rivers around Jerusalem are metaphorical. Was the Lord around the earthly city, like broad rivers and streams, when the Romans camped against it in 70 AD? Obviously not. The prophecy applies to the heavenly city, as the Jerusalem of prophecy was raised up, and was no longer the earthly city.

Psalm 125:2

As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

Neither was God around about the earthly Jerusalem, when the Romans came against it. These prophecies can only apply to the heavenly city, where Jesus reigns upon David's throne.

4. Was David's throne raised up?

The 4th of the 15 arguments by George Zeller against the idea that Christ now reigns upon the throne of David in this article is from Jeremiah:

"And say, Hear the word of the LORD, O king of Judah, that sittest upon the THRONE OF DAVID, thou, and thy servants, and thy people that enter in by these gates: For if ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the THRONE OF DAVID, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people" (Jeremiah 22:2,4).

"Thus saith the LORD, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days: for no man of his seed shall prosper, SITTING UPON THE THRONE OF DAVID, and ruling any more in Judah" (Jeremiah 22:30).

David's throne is in Jerusalem of Judah, on earth, not in heaven.

The Jews who delivered up Jesus to be crucified were looking for a restoration of the temporal power of the kingdom of David, in this world. But Paul said that they had been made blind. "What then? Israel hath not obtained that which he seeketh for; but the election hath obtained it, and the rest were blinded." [Romans 11:7] What were they seeking? The promised king, reigning on David's throne. They did not recognize Jesus as their Messiah, and had him killed. But God raised him up from the grave, and he ascended to heaven. This is when the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2 was fulfilled. In Christ, the promised king of the line of David, the mountain of the Lord's house, the true temple, mount Zion, and the holy city were established in the "tops of the mountains" and exulted "above the hills," in heaven.

The world is blind to this, as it is spiritually discerned.

Isaiah 2:2

And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.

Many signs accompanied the fulfillment of this prophecy. Miracles were performed by the apostles.

After Jesus ascended to heaven, the Jerusalem of prophecy is not the earthly city, but the heavenly one.

5. Jesus, King of the Jews

The 5th of George Zeller's 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, is that Jesus cannot now be a king, since his reign is upon earth. Zeller wrote:

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto DAVID a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice IN THE EARTH. In His days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is His Name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jeremiah 23:5-6).

When will the Messiah be upon David's throne? This will take place when Messiah the King reigns and executes justice IN THE EARTH. At this time Israel will dwell safely. This can only mean that Christ will sit on David's throne during His millennial reign and

not before.

The one foretold in Jeremiah's prophecy is Jesus. What is meant by the phrase "in his days"? The generation of Jesus began when he was born. Matthew tells us he was born "King of the Jews."

Matthew 2:1-3

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

When Peter acknowledged that Jesus was the Christ, the promised Messiah, this implied he was the king of Israel, who inherited David's throne. Jesus said that God had revealed this to Peter.

Matthew 16:13-17

When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.

Before he was crucified, Jesus wore a crown of thorns.

Matthew 27:29

And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!

On the cross, a label was posted, saying he was the king of the Jews.

John 19:19

And Pilate wrote a title, and put it on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS.

Since he rose from the grave, and remains alive, throughout the first century, and every century since, his generation, and his days continue. Jesus has been reigning over the Israel of God, on the throne of David, throughout the history of the church, confirming his covenant with those who love him.

6. What is the land of Christ's kingdom?

In the 6th of his 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, George Zeller declared that the territory of Christ's kingdom is upon the earth. His judgment is executed on earth, at Jerusalem, he said. Zeller wrote:

“In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up UNTO DAVID; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness IN THE LAND” (Jeremiah 33:15).

“In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our righteousness” (Jeremiah 33:16).

The TIME when the Messiah will assume the throne of David is here pinpointed, as well as the PLACE. The TIME: the millennial reign of Christ when righteousness will characterize the earth and when peace and safety will characterize Jerusalem. The PLACE: “in the land,” that is ON THE EARTH, in the city of Jerusalem.

Nothing in the verses quoted above proves, or even suggests, that the phrase “in those days” refers to a future millennium, rather than the present age of the church; however, the phrase “to execute judgment and righteousness in the land” does raise the question, which land is meant?

What is the land promised to the saints? What is the “*better country*” of Hebrews 11:16? Jeremiah's prophecy said judgment is executed in “the land.” Until Christ was raised from the grave, prophecies about the land referred to the

land of Canaan, but after Jesus sat at God's right hand, and received the throne of David, and when the spiritual realities of the gospel replaced the types and shadows, the promised land was understood as a figure and type of the "better country" of the saints, which is the spiritual territory, to which the saints have come. Isaiah 2:2 foretold this. Isaiah said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it." This happened when Jesus ascended to heaven. So the *land* containing the mountain of the Lord's house is a *heavenly country*. There are spiritual rivers in it, and valleys, and so forth. Isaiah said:

Isaiah 40:4-5

Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.

The crooked things becoming straight must mean *flawed interpretations* of scripture will be put right, and wrong beliefs will be corrected. Mountains were *made low* when the gospel was revealed; the literal mountains of the promised land were perceived as types and *shadows* of spiritual realities. The mountains represent *promises* of God.

When Jacob blessed Joseph his son, he compared his blessings to "the utmost bound of the everlasting hills," or high mountains, as they were high and lofty, like mountains, having a spiritual meaning, and also eternal. [Genesis 49:25] So in prophecy, the blessings and promises of God are represented by mountains.

In Revelation 12, there is warfare in heaven:

Revelation 12:7-9

And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels,
And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven.
And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.

Verse 8 says no *place* was found in heaven for Satan, or for any of his angels. They are removed from the territory or the land where the woman dwells, or her spiritual environment. In verse 1, the woman clothed with the sun is in heaven.

Paul said that God has “raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” [Ephesians 2:6] This is the “better country” that the saints look for. [Hebrews 11:16]

Heaven represents the spiritual inheritance of the saints. Jesus declared that heaven is God’s throne. [Matthew 5:34]

The inheritance of the saints is spiritual; the land in the promise to Abraham foreshadowed the spiritual inheritance of the saints. The rivers in it are spiritual streams of knowledge, wisdom and understanding, that flow from the throne of God. Jesus promised that the Spirit would guide the saints into all truth. [John 16:13]

In the Old Covenant the promised land was a type of the knowledge of God. The priests and Levites received no inheritance of land, but the Lord was their inheritance. The service of the Lord was *in lieu* of land. When Israel departed from the worship of God they were removed from the land, and were scattered in other lands. The promised land represents the knowledge of God, and dwelling in other lands represented their loss of blessing, and not possessing their promised inheritance.

The promised land of the saints is the truth, so there is no room there for Satan’s deceptions.

Judgments are represented by valleys. When David referred to “the valley of the shadow of death,” in Psalm 23:4, he said “thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.” The Spirit Jesus promised to send is called the Comforter. [John 14:16]

Revelation 12:10-11

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.

And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Salvation, strength, and the kingdom of God come, when Satan is cast out. The saints who overcome his deceptions understand that Christ is king, and reign with him.

In Jeremiah 33:16, Christ is identified with Jerusalem. He represents the righteousness of the saints, which is also pictured by the sun clothing the heavenly woman. When Jesus ascended to heaven as described in Acts 1, Jerusalem became the heavenly Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem of those who are saved is the heavenly city, not the earthly one. In Revelation 21:22, John wrote: "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." Those who are in Christ, are included in the heavenly city.

7. A royal priesthood

In the 7th of his 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, George Zeller raises the question of God's perpetual covenant with the Levites. Taking this literally, Zeller argues that the prophecy requires the restoration of both David's throne and the Levitical priesthood in a millennial temple. He wrote:

"Neither shall the priests the Levites want a man before Me to offer burnt offerings, and to kindle meat offerings, and to do sacrifice continually. Then may also My covenant be broken with DAVID My servant, that he should not have a son to reign upon HIS THRONE; and WITH THE LEVITES the priests, My ministers (Jeremiah 33:18,21).

The throne of David is here associated with Levitical priests. Christ cannot be upon the throne of David apart from an association with Levitical priests. During this present age there are no functioning Levitical priests. During the millennium Levitical/Zadokian priests will be associated with Christ and serving in the millennial temple (Ezekiel 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11).

Jesus identified himself with the temple of God, and the Spirit was given to him beyond measure. [John 3:34] He said God's temple is to be a house of prayer for all people. [Luke 19:46, citing Isaiah 56:7] He said, "destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." [John 2:19] Since Jesus was raised up from the grave, and ascended to heaven, *the temple of God* was also raised up. The temple was called *mount Zion*, and after Jesus ascended to his throne in heaven, prophecies that mention *mount Zion* and *Jerusalem* apply to the church that he is building, rather than the earthly city of Jerusalem. When Jesus ascended to heaven, the *mountain of the Lord's house* was "established in the tops of the mountains," fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 2:2.

Jesus taught that the days are past, when people need to go to the *earthly* Jerusalem to worship God, [John 4:21] but apparently, dispensationalism disagrees. George Zeller certainly has a contrary opinion.

According to Paul, every believer is a temple of God. [1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19] The church, consisting of those who are “in Christ,” is depicted as a temple, [Ephesians 2:20-22] and the saints “sit together in heavenly places.” [Ephesians 2:5-6]

The apostle Peter described believers as stones built up into a spiritual house, or temple, and they are also a holy priesthood, offering up spiritual sacrifices. [1 Peter 2:5] Because Jesus is our high priest, and because he also reigns as king on the throne of David, the saints are a *royal priesthood*, being part of the house of David, by their connection to Jesus. The church is Christ's *body*.

Living holy lives, acceptable unto God, is “our reasonable service,” Paul said. [Romans 12:1] He encouraged believers to be “fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.” [Romans 12:11-12] He wrote: “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God; therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another.” [Romans 14:17-19] It seems incredible that in the light of Paul's statements about the kingdom as a *present reality*, some dispensationalists continue to deny that Jesus reigns in David's throne. They are in the dark! Peter said:

1 Peter 2:8-10

But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light; Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

The history of Israel's possession of the land, dwelling there for a few centuries, and their ultimate loss of the land, is the theme of the Old Testament. The whole account is a metaphor. The prophets foretold a future restoration, which is fulfilled by those who come to Christ; in the New Testament, a *better country* is revealed for the saints.

In Hebrews 3:18-19, entering the *rest* represented by the promised land requires belief. Exile in other countries corresponds to ignorance, superstition, and delusions. See Sheep, green pastures, and the promised land.

There is no line of ethnically pure Levite priests, and neither is it possible to restore such a priesthood, because of centuries of intermarriage of Jews among the twelve tribes and with Gentiles. Only an ideal interpretation of the prophecies about the Levites makes any sense. Those who serve the earthly tabernacle have

no right to come to the heavenly altar where the saints offer acceptable sacrifices. [Hebrews 13:10]

The spiritual temple described in Ezekiel 40-46 is located in the promised land, but it is not an earthly, literal one. The *land* of the prophecy corresponds to the “*better country*” of Hebrews 11:16, “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.” It is the “place” Jesus said he would prepare for his saints. [John 14:1-3]

Frederic Gardiner discussed several reasons why Ezekiel’s description of the temple, the river flowing from it, and the division of the land, should be understood figuratively, and why insisting on a literal approach leads to contradictions. See Gardiner’s Preliminary note on Ezekiel 40-48.²

In the assignment of land to the various tribes described in Ezekiel 48, there are certain areas, in the oblation, for the priests and Levites. But they were not supposed to receive any land, because “the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance.” The privilege of service to God, and possessing the knowledge of God, was *in lieu* of possessing land. This illustrates how significant the land was, in the Old Testament. The land in Ezekiel’s prophecy must be symbolic; the things said of the land allude to *the spiritual things that the land represents*.

Moses associated the promised land, which the Israelites sought to enter after they were delivered from Egypt, with *milk and honey*. [Exodus 16:31] David compared the words of God with honey; he wrote: “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” [Psalm 119:103]

In one of Ezekiel’s visions, he was given a scroll to eat, and he said it tasted sweet like honey. [Ezekiel 3:3] In Revelation, John described a similar experience. [Revelation 10:8-10] The symbols of milk and honey connect the promised land with the Scriptures.

8. I reap where I did not sow

In the 8th of his 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, George Zeller asserts that “literal interpretation is to be preferred.” He wrote:

“And DAVID My servant shall be King over them; and they all

²Frederic Gardiner. Ezekiel: Preliminary note on chapters XL.-XLVIII. In: Charles John Ellicott, ed., An Old Testament commentary for English readers, by various writers. Vol. v. Cassell & Co. 1884. pp. 314-316.

shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in My judgments, and observe My statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant, wherein your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell therein, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and My servant David shall be their PRINCE for ever" (Ezekiel 37:24-25).

The resurrected David, who is called both KING and PRINCE, will be directly involved in the millennial government, serving under Christ: "Directly under Christ, having authority over all Israel, will be the resurrected David, who is given both titles of king and prince. He will be king because he will rule over Israel, but he will be a prince in that he will be under the authority of Christ" (Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *The Footprints of the Messiah*, page 282). See Jeremiah 30:9; Ezekiel 34:23-24 and Hosea 3:5.

These passages are often explained in a non-literal way as referring not to David himself, but to David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, though the literal interpretation is to be preferred. But regardless of this, during this present church age we are never told that David is reigning as King or as Prince. David the future king/prince is only mentioned in a millennial, earthly, Jewish context.

There is a problem applying prophecies that speak of eternal things to the temporal lives of men. When Ezekiel said that Israel will walk in God's ways, and observe his statutes, and that *David* will be their king, he is speaking of the New Covenant. As Zeller noted, in Ezekiel's prophecies, *David* refers to Christ, who is to reign upon the *throne of David* forever. The next verses demonstrate this is so.

Ezekiel 37:26-27

Moreover I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set my sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Paul uses similar language in his 2nd letter to the Corinthians. It seems likely he had Ezekiel 37:26-27 in view.

2 Corinthians 6:16

And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are

the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people.

Jesus said many deceivers would come in his name. The Scripture says that Jesus has been given all power in heaven and earth, [Matthew 28:18] and so a Christ who does not have all power, and who is not Lord over all things, is another, inferior Christ.

In regards to literal interpretation, consider the parable of the talents, which Jesus gave his disciples, and which Matthew includes in the Olivet Discourse, in Matthew 25:14-30.

Jesus said to the man who received one talent, which he hid in the earth, "Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury."

What if *prophecy* is put in the place of *talents*? The man who buried his talent is similar to the *literalist*, and Jesus might say to him, "Thou oughtest therefore to have put my word to the *interpreters*." There are many commentaries available, which they could consult. But they reject all the spiritual interpretations of saints who went before, distilled over centuries, which applied prophecy to the church in the present age. The various dispensational interpretations have contributed to countless divisions, sects, controversies, and strife. The literal approach rejects the idea that Christ is right now reigning over his church on the throne of David; his reign was put off into the future.

9. Many days without a king

In the 9th of his 15 arguments against the idea that Christ now reigns upon the throne of David, in this article, George Zeller applies a prophecy of Hosea, that Israel would "abide many days without a king" to ethnic Jews, and so concludes that Christ can not now be reigning on the throne of David. Zeller wrote:

"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 shall the children of Israel return, and seek the LORD their God, and DAVID their king; and shall fear the LORD and His goodness in the latter days" (Hosea 3:4-5).

Today Israel is without a king and Christ is not ruling on the throne of David. In the future Israel will return and seek the Lord. At that time they will not be without a King. Their King will be on David's throne in Jerusalem.

This argument would only makes sense to dispensationalists, who deny that the Gentile believers are included in the seed of Abraham by faith in Christ, and in God's promises to Israel. But the prophecy of Isaiah in Isaiah 2:2 said the mountain of the Lord's house would be established in the tops of the mountains, and exulted above the hills, and this was fulfilled when Jesus was raised up to heaven, to the throne of God, as described in Acts 1 and 2. With Jesus, the Jerusalem to which the prophecies apply was raised up, above the hills, to heaven. Isaiah's prophecy establishes the continuity of the Old Testament Israel and Jerusalem with the New Testament church.

In Athens, Paul was accused by the philosophers there of preaching that Jesus reigns as king, a teaching which which they considered threatening to Caesar.

Acts 17:6-7

These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also; Whom Jason hath received: and these all do contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, one Jesus.

Paul wrote that believers have been "translated" into Christ's kingdom.

Colossians 1:12-13

Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:

John referred to himself as our brother and *companion* in the kingdom of Christ.

Revelation 1:9

I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ...

Peter gave a list of instructions how we may be certain that we may enter into Christ's everlasting kingdom.

2 Peter 1:10-11

Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The author of Hebrews said we have *no continuing city* here on earth, but we seek one to come. He wrote, "let us go unto him without the camp," alluding to the fact that Jesus died outside Jerusalem.

Hebrews 13:13-14

Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.

The earthly Jerusalem was not a "continuing city," but the heavenly one is. [Psalm 125:1; Isaiah 33:20; Micah 4:7] The earthly Jerusalem was about to be destroyed.

Christians who were once dispensationalists, but abandoned it, represent a possible fulfillment of Hosea's prophecy. Many an expose of dispensationalism has been written by former dispensationalists; e.g., A. W. Pink,³ Kim Riddlebarger,⁴ William Cox,⁵ Nathan Pitchford,⁶ Rev. Stephen Sizer⁷ and many others. Hosea's prophecy suggests there will be many more, who will turn from error, and seek the Christ who now rules on the throne of David.

10. They shall no more be pulled up out of their land, Amos 9:15

In the 10th of his 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, George Zeller commented on the prophecy of Amos 9:11-15, which James applied to the church in Acts 15:16. Zeller wrote:

"In that day will I raise up the TABERNACLE OF DAVID that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his

³<http://www.theologue.org/refutation-pink.html>

⁴<http://exiledpreacher.blogspot.ca/2008/02/against-dispensationalism.html>

⁵<http://www.theologue.org/DispensationalismExamined-WECox.html>

⁶<http://pitchfordsramblings.com/2005/06/01/is-dispensationalism-biblical/>

⁷<http://www.stephensizer.com/books/zions-christian-soldiers/>

ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by My Name, saith the LORD that doeth this. Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt. And I will bring again the captivity of my people of Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them. And I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them, saith the LORD thy God" (Amos 9:11-15).

The raising up of the fallen booth of David is associated with the restoration of Israel (v.14) when God will "plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land" (v.15). This implies that prior to the millennium the tabernacle of David was in a fallen condition. Christ, therefore, did not restore the throne and tabernacle of David when He sat down at the right hand of the Father. The tabernacle of David has not yet been restored, but it will be in the future when Christ assumes His millennial throne.

The throne of David was cast down when the sons of Zedekiah were killed in front of him, and then his eyes were gouged out, and he was taken to Babylon in chains. [2 Kings 25:6-7]

The throne of David was restored, and established, when Christ was resurrected, and became head of the church, which is the Jerusalem above.

Christ rules over all things, and he is reigning over his church. In Zechariah 12 and 14, his enemies are smitten with blindness; this is a spiritual kind of blindness, like the blindness of the Jewish Pharisees, who did not recognize him as their promised Messiah and king, but delivered him up to be crucified.

In the law, the Levites received no inheritance of land, but the Lord was their inheritance, *in lieu* of land. And in prophecy, land is a figure or a symbol of invisible, spiritual things, that Christians inherit, because "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." [Hebrews 11:1]

The prophecy, "I will plant them upon their land, and they shall no more be pulled up out of their land which I have given them" in Amos 9:15 must be understood as a spiritual, and eternal promise, the land representing the *spiritual* inheritance of the saints, which is supported by the interpretation of James when he applied the prophecy to the church in Acts 15:16.

11. Is the throne of David a type?

In this article, George Zeller discusses 15 prophecies referring to the throne of David, and attempts to show that none of them apply to the present reign of Christ in his church. Zeller is the assistant pastor at the church, and the author of most of the articles at the site.

His 11th argument states:

“He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of his father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32-33).

Notice that His sitting on the throne of David is clearly linked with His reign over the house of Jacob (Israel). Today Christ is Head over the Church which is His body. It is not until the future millennium that Christ will rule over the house of Jacob. It is then that the kingdom will be restored again to Israel.

The throne of David is linked to Christ’s reign over Israel because David was king of the twelve tribes of Israel, in Jerusalem, and Christ’s reign in his church is also over the twelve tribes of Israel, in the heavenly Jerusalem, the Gentile saints being grafted in. [Romans 11:17] The twelve tribes are depicted in Revelation 7:4-8, where 12,000 are sealed from each of twelve tribes. This is an ideal, and highly figurative description of the sealing of the church with the Spirit. [2 Corinthians 1:22; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30]

David’s rule in the earthly Jerusalem was a type of the reign of Christ in the heavenly city. It was not a type of a future king who will reign in the earthly city, as in the types and figures of prophecy, earthly things foreshadow spiritual, eternal things, not a repetition of the earthly event. The reign of David does not foreshadow the reign of a future king in the earthly Jerusalem; rather, it foreshadows and typifies the reign of Christ during the whole age of the church.

12. When will Israel’s kingdom be restored?

In the 12th of 15 arguments against the idea that Christ now reigns upon the throne of David in this article, George Zeller discussed the question that the disciples asked Jesus in Acts 1:6-8, about whether he would now restore the kingdom to Israel. Jesus said it was not for them to know the times and seasons. Zeller wrote:

“When they therefore were come together, they asked of Him, saying, Lord, wilt Thou at this time RESTORE AGAIN THE KINGDOM TO ISRAEL? And He said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth” (Acts 1:6-8).

Please observe what the Lord did not say. He did not say this: “In not many days I will sit down on David’s throne and the kingdom will be re-established!” No, the kingdom would be restored to Israel, but not yet. God’s new program, the church, was about to begin. When God restores the kingdom to Israel, Jerusalem will be the CENTER POINT. In God’s new program, the church, Jerusalem is merely the STARTING POINT as Christ’s witnesses go forth to the uttermost part of the earth.

The things the disciples preached after the resurrection were not a new program, as Zeller suggests above, but were things that had been foretold in the prophets, although now they were understood in a new way. Luke tells how after Jesus rose up from the grave he revealed himself to the disciples, and showed them how his crucifixion was the fulfillment of prophecy.

Luke 24:44-48

And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me.

Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

And ye are witnesses of these things.

These were the things the disciples were witnesses to in the years following. Peter showed that Christ was reigning in his heavenly kingdom, and had been made Lord over all. He said, “Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made the same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.” [Acts 2:36]

Having been made “Christ” meant that he fulfilled the prophecies about a king who was to reign on the throne of David forever.

In the synoptic gospels, several events indicate that during the ministry of Jesus the kingdom was expected to come in a literal, earthly fashion. [Matthew 18:1; 20:21; Mark 11:9-11]

Jesus indicated the kingdom was imminent, “at hand,” and even that it “had come.” He said to the Jews, “But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.” [Matthew 12:28] He taught the disciples to expect it to appear in their lifetimes. “Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power.” [Mark 9:1]

At the last supper, he said that he would not drink wine again, until he did so with them in the kingdom of God. [Mark 14:25]

After Acts 1:6-8, there is no further mention of the kingdom being established in an earthly, literal manner; they understood it had come, and Jesus was now reigning in heaven. Jesus was a king reigning among his saints, who also became kings and priests. This was the message of the disciples, and it was confirmed by many miracles during the first century. Jesus had told them, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” [Matthew 28:18]

Paul said Jesus had been given all authority and power, and he was “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.” [Ephesians 1:21-23]

Many dispensationalists today abide in a kind of *partial unbelief*, because they do not recognize Christ as the king who reigns on David’s throne; and because they ignore Paul’s teaching that unbelieving Jews are *cut off*, when they reject Christ and the gospel, according to the law. From what are they cut off? *Israel*. They were no longer included in the *Israel of God*. “And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.” [Acts 3:23] Paul said they are branches broken off, no longer attached to their tree. [Romans 11:17-19]

Dispensationalists also fail to recognize that the kingdom where Jesus reigns is in *heavenly* Jerusalem, which is his church; Jerusalem was raised up, and established in the tops of the mountains, and exulted above the hills, as foretold in Isaiah 2:2, when Jesus ascended to heaven. It is “the city of the great King.” [Matthew 5:35]

13. David's throne in Acts 2:29-36

The 13th of George Zeller's 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, was the following:

"Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch DAVID, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ TO SIT ON HIS THRONE; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, He hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, UNTIL I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:29-36).

This passage is used by Progressive Dispensationalists in their attempt to prove that Christ sat down on the throne of David when He sat at the right hand of God. However, the passage does not say that Christ is now seated upon the throne of David. It does say (v.30) that God raised up Christ to sit on David's throne. It is obvious that the resurrection was a prerequisite for Christ to sit on David's throne. How could a dead Messiah sit on David's throne? Compare John 12:32-34 where the Jews were perplexed by the problem of how a dead Messiah could reign forever and ever.

The kingdom promised to David does not begin with Christ's exaltation and session in heaven. It begins with Christ's return to earth. This is made clear in Acts 2:34-35. The key word is "UNTIL." Christ will not return to earth and will not sit upon David's throne until His enemies are made His footstool.

It makes no sense to speak of Christ sitting on David's throne as if it were a literal one; the expression *David's throne* means the *office* of ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel; it is not a *literal* chair, to be set up in a court in the earthly Jerusalem in the future. The *Israel* Christ rules is the church: the heavenly Jerusalem. At Pentecost, in his address to the Jews, Peter said that Jesus had ascended to God's throne, and had sent the Spirit as foretold in Joel 2:28.

Joel wrote, "So shall ye know that I am the Lord your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more." [Joel 3:17] The Jerusalem to which this applies is the heavenly one; "But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." [Hebrews 12:22]

Joel said, "a fountain shall come forth out of the house of the Lord, and shall water the valley of Shittim." [Joel 3:18] No doubt, the valley of Shittim here is figurative; it was the place where Israel camped, before they entered the promised land. It was where they began to commit whoredom with the daughters of Moab. [Numbers 25:1] If the whoredom in that event applies figuratively and spiritually to Christians attached to false doctrines, the fountain provides a remedy for it.

No literal river could flow across the Dead sea, and up-slope on the other side of the Jordan River. Alluding to Israel in the wilderness, the church is represented by the woman who is nourished in the wilderness in Revelation 12:6 and 14, and the church is called the "camp of the saints" in Revelation 20:9. The fountain in Joel's prophecy represents the Holy Spirit, sent at Pentecost, which has remained in the church since then. It was manifested as "tongues of fire." [Acts 2:3]

The same fountain mentioned in Joel's prophecy is called a "fiery stream" in Daniel's description of Christ reigning during the present age.

Daniel 7:10

A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened.

Jesus spoke of his word as a "fire."

Luke 12:49

I am come to send fire on the earth; and what will I, if it be already kindled?

Jesus came to send the fire of the gospel on the earth; it has been burning continually since. The "fiery stream" is the message of the gospel, which continues to go forth during the whole age of the church. Since the "fire" and the "fiery stream" of the Spirit began in the first century, and continue since then, God is dwelling in Zion, which is his holy mountain, the church of which Christ is the chief cornerstone.

14. Was the kingdom offered to the Jews?

In the 14th of his 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, George Zeller invokes the notion that there was a *postponement* of the kingdom of Christ, after it was offered to the Jews. Zeller wrote:

“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive UNTIL the times of restitution [restoration] of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began” (Acts 3:19-21).

In the early chapters of the book of Acts the nation Israel was given opportunity to REPENT. Had they repented, the Lord Jesus would have left His heavenly throne and would have come to His earthly throne, thus restoring the kingdom to Israel. Notice again our key word, “UNTIL.” Christ sits at the right hand of the Father and heaven receives Him UNTIL the right time comes to SEND JESUS back to the earth. It is only then that the restitution/restoration of all things will take place and the kingdom will be restored to Israel. It is then and only then that Christ will sit on the throne of David, on earth, in Jerusalem.

For a fascinating study of God’s offer of the kingdom to the Jews in the book of Acts, see *The Strategic Grasp of the Bible* by J. Sidlow Baxter (Zondervan).

Dispensationalists employ the theory about the kingdom being “offered” to the Jews, in order to hide a glaring flaw in their doctrine. Jesus preached that the kingdom was *at hand*; the time for entering the kingdom was *near*. He said it was something that people should *seek*; search for it as if for a very precious pearl. This would fit the idea that Christ’s kingdom spans the present age, but not the idea that there was a *parenthesis* of about two thousand years before the kingdom could appear. Dispensationalists reject the idea that Christ is now ruling as king, which, if true, would mean we ought to *obey* him. The notion that the kingdom was “offered” to the Jews, but then postponed, was their explanation for why the kingdom was said to be “at hand,” in the gospel accounts, yet, as claimed in their scheme, does not now exist.

Stephen J. Nichols wrote:⁸

In an essay entitled, "The Church—What Is It?," Darby pointed out, "It is of great importance to distinguish between the kingdom and the church." He added, "In fact, it appears to me a confusion of the Jewish and Gentile dispensations—the hinge upon which the subject [prophecy] and the understanding of scripture turns." A crucial aspect of this distinction for Darby was the rejection of Christ as the Anointed, the son of David, King of Israel. Commenting on Luke 3, he wrote, "In fact we know John was beheaded, and the Lord was crucified, and the kingdom presented in Him, and by Him, was rejected by Israel. By-and-by it will be set up visibly and in power. Meanwhile the church is set up, because the kingdom is not set up in this manifested way."

Darby's statement that "the kingdom presented in Him, and by Him, was rejected by Israel" is almost directly *opposite* to the New Testament teaching, which says that those Israelites who did not believe in Christ were *cut off*, and were no longer part of Israel. On the other hand, all those who believed, including Gentiles, became part of the Israel of God, and the circumcision, and were included in the covenants of promise. [Ephesians 2:12; Philippians 3:3]

Both Peter and Paul taught that any Jew who did not believe in Christ, was cut off, as the law of Moses said. Peter said, "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you. And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people." [Acts 2:22-23]

Paul in Romans 11:17 refers to Jews who remained in unbelief as branches broken off from their tree. He also said, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel." [Romans 9:6] This implies, unbelievers among the Jews were no longer Israel. But dispensationalists *refuse* to believe these scriptures; they insist that unbelieving Jews are still "Israel."

Philip Mauro wrote a critique of the postponement theory in *The Kingdom of God: has it been postponed?*⁹

⁸The dispensational view of the Davidic kingdom: a response to Progressive Dispensationalism. TMSJ 7/2 (Fall 1996) 213-239.

⁹http://www.gospeltruth.net/gospel_of_the_kingdom/gotk_ch5.htm

15. James and the tabernacle of David

The last of George Zeller's 15 arguments against the idea that Christ reigns upon the throne of David now, in this article, deals with the comment by James in Acts 15:16, which assumes there is continuity between Israel of Old Testament prophecy and the New Testament church, contrary to the premises of dispensationalism. Zeller wrote:

“Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, 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 is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My Name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things” (Acts 15:14-17).

This passage so very clearly sets forth God's time schedule as it relates to His present program (the Church which is His body) and His future program (the kingdom as promised to Israel). First we have God's present program which involves God visiting the nations (the Gentiles), taking out of them a people for His Name. The Church is God's called-out assembly, made up of saved Jews and saved Gentiles united together in one body, sharing a common LIFE and LORD. “AFTER THIS” (after God's “church” program has been completed) Christ will return and the tabernacle of David will be built again and set up. The kingdom will be restored to Israel as Christ sits upon the throne of David, all in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant.

The prophecy of Amos 9:11, quoted by James, said that God will rebuild the fallen tent of David. James connected the tent or house of David with the church the Jesus is building in the present age. The following comment by John William McGarvey in McGarvey's Original Commentary on Acts is enlightening. McGarvey explains that “after this” must refer to the period when the tabernacle of David was in ruins, which was since the line of kings of Judah ended, at the exile in Babylon. Contrary to Zeller's forced interpretation, James could not have meant “after God's ‘church’ program has been completed.” James said the calling of the Gentiles into the church was a fulfillment of the prophecy of Amos, which was made possible because God had rebuilt the tabernacle of David, and had set Jesus upon his throne. McGarvey wrote:¹⁰

¹⁰William McGarvey's Commentary on Acts
<http://w.studylight.org/com/oca/>

The controversy now pending, in reference to the identity of the Jewish Church with the Church of Christ, renders it necessary that we should here pay some special attention to one remark made by James in this speech. He applies the prophesy concerning the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David" to the reception of the Gentiles into the Church, and it is hence argued that this prophesy contemplated a reconstruction and extension of the dilapidated Jewish Church, and not the construction of a new one. The whole argument turns upon the meaning of the expression "tabernacle of David." If the metaphorical word *tabernacle* here means the Jewish Church, the argument would have force. But the Mosaic institution never sustained such a relation to David that it could, with propriety, be styled the "*tabernacle of David*." If such had been the reference, the expression would undoubtedly have been, the *tabernacle of Moses*, which would have been unambiguous. But David was a king, and had a promise from God, that his "*throne* should be established forever;" [2 Samuel 7:16.] that there should not fail him a man on the throne of Israel. [1 Kings 2:4.] This promise God confirmed with an oath, saying, "I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn to David my servant, Thy seed will I establish forever, and build up thy throne to all generations." [Psalm 89:3,4.] According to the *apparent* meaning of this promise, it had long since failed; for it had been many generations since a descendant of David had occupied his throne. It was during this period, in which the royal house of David was in ruins, that Amos uttered the prophesy, "I will return, and build again the tabernacle of David which is fallen down; I will build again the ruins thereof, and set it upright." The term *tabernacle*, therefore, must be put for the family who dwell in the tabernacle, and the reconstruction of it the re-establishment of the royal dignity which the family had lost. Hence, when the birth of Jesus was announced to Mary, the angel said: "The Lord shall give to 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." [Luke 1:32,33.] Thus, the promise, when properly understood, is seen to refer neither to a continuous line of Jewish kings, descended from David, nor to a reconstruction of the Jewish Church, but to the perpetual reign of Jesus, the "seed of David according to the flesh." [Romans 1:3.] When, therefore, Jesus sat down upon his throne in heaven, the tabernacle of David was rebuilt, and now, by the labors of Peter, Barnabas, and Paul, the remainder of the prophesy of Amos was being fulfilled, by the extension of his kingdom among the Gentiles.