

The Kingdom of God

Lesson 10: The End of the Kingdom in History

I. Recognizing the Historical End

- a. There is some debate as to the precise time of the termination of the historical kingdom on earth. Some place it at the time of the Babylonian captivity, others at the beginning of the NT era. However, **Ezekiel** provides a more definite clue in chapters 8-11.
- b. The entrance of the kingdom on earth began with a remarkable show of **supernatural** power and glory at Sinai and it is reasonable to expect that God would provide an unmistakable sign that the end had come.
- c. That sign may well have been the “glory of Jehovah” often referred to in the Old Testament as the “**Shekinah**”. This was more than a mere symbol of God’s presence. It was the form in which the God of Israel revealed Himself.
- d. This is seen in multiple passages in which God’s presence is manifest as the “burning bush”, the Pillar of Cloud and Fire, and God’s appearance in Mount **Sinai** as well. Ex 19:18 *And mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire: KJV*
- e. Later in the history of the kingdom, when Solomon had finished his dedicatory prayer, the same emblem is presented in the temple as the glory of the Lord **filled the house**. 2 Chron 7:1 *Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. KJV*
- f. Thus, it can be said that the Shekinah-Glory was the **visible** evidence of Jehovah’s personal presence and rule in the Mediatorial Kingdom of Israel throughout its history.
- g. Therefore, the end was recognizable because, like its arrival, the departure too was a supernatural event which graphically depicted God’s departure as the Shekinah-Glory **left the Temple**.

II. Setting the Stage

- a. The departure of the glory of Jehovah is placed by Ezekiel in the **6th** year of captivity of king Jehoiachin. Ezek 8:1 *And it came to pass in the sixth year, in the sixth month, in the fifth day of the month, as I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell there upon me. KJV*
- b. Ezekiel was taken in a vision back to Jerusalem where he witnessed the existing spiritual and moral conditions at Jerusalem which God judged as **abhorrent** to Himself. Ezek 8:6 *And he said to me, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing — the utterly detestable things the house of Israel is doing here, things that will drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see things that are even more detestable." NIV*
- c. The king of Babylon had taken captive the wealthy and productive people, and had removed all the substance and treasure of Jerusalem and left only the **poorest** sort of people of the land. 2 Kings 24:14 *He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans — a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left. NIV*
- d. Those who remained acted like men intoxicated with their new power and property. **Injustice** filled the land. Ezek 9:9 *"The sin of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great; the land is full of bloodshed and the city is full of injustice. NIV*
 1. **False** prophets arose predicting a speedy restoration of what had been lost to Nebuchadnezzar. Jer 27:14-15 *Do not listen to the words of the prophets who say to you, 'You will not serve the king of Babylon,' for they are prophesying lies to you. 15'I have not sent them,' declares the LORD. NIV*
 2. Attempts were made to solicit the help of **surrounding** nations which only brought about a deeper plunge into the ways and idolatries of these nations whose friendship was being cultivated. Jer 27:2-3 *This is what the LORD said to me: "Make a yoke out of straps and crossbars and put it on your neck. 3 Then send word to the kings of Edom, Moab, Ammon, Tyre and Sidon through the envoys who have come to Jerusalem to Zedekiah king of Judah. NIV*
 3. Ezekiel saw 70 of the elders worship before creature **idols**. Ezek 8:10-11 *So I went in and looked, and I saw portrayed all over the walls all kinds of crawling things and detestable animals and all the idols of the house of Israel. 11 In front of them stood seventy elders of the house of Israel, and Jaazaniah son of Shaphan was standing among them. Each had a censer in his hand, and a fragrant cloud of incense was rising. NIV*
 4. He saw a woman weeping for **Tammuz**, a heathen god whose worship involved licentious orgies. Ezek 8:14-15 *and I saw women sitting there, mourning for Tammuz. 15 He said to me, "Do you see this, son of man? You will see things that are even more detestable than this." NIV*
 5. Then Ezekiel was brought into the inner court where he saw the priesthood with their backs toward the temple worshipping the **rising sun**. Ezek 8:16 *between the portico and the altar, were about twenty-five men. With their backs toward the temple of the LORD and their faces toward the east, they were bowing down to the sun in the east. NIV*
 6. The **apostasy** of Israel as depicted in Jerusalem was complete, involving the people, the elders, the women, and the priesthood.
- e. God had judged Israel and the end had come. Israel had **forfeited** their political supremacy as well as their religious supremacy. Ezek 21:26-27 *Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low. 27 A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! It will not be restored until he comes to whom it rightfully belongs; to him I will give it.' NIV*

III. The Vision of the Departing Glory

- a. In Ezekiel chapters 8 through 11 we see the unfolding **vision** of the departing glory of the Lord.
 1. The glory of the God of Israel **was there** Ezek 8:3-4 *God he took me to Jerusalem, to the entrance to the north gate of the inner court, where the idol that provokes to jealousy stood. 4 And there before me was the glory of the God of Israel, as in the vision I had seen in the plain. NIV*
 2. The glory of the Lord was gone up to the **threshold** of the house Ezek 9:3 *Now the glory of the God of Israel went up from above the cherubim, where it had been, and moved to the threshold of the temple. NIV*
 3. Finally the cherubim lifted their wings and the glory of the Lord went up from the **midst of the city**. Ezek 11:23 *The glory of the LORD went up from within the city and stopped above the mountain east of it. NIV*
- b. The departure of Jehovah marked a change in His theocratic relation to His people, a change that continues **to this day**.
- c. Israel **did not** cease to be His covenant people. His purpose in them is yet to be fulfilled; His promises respecting Messiah and His kingdom were not withdrawn.

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- d. God Himself was no longer **reigning** at Jerusalem, the Visible Glory no longer dwelt between the cherubim, the Ark was not in the Most Holy Place, the holy fire no longer burned upon the brazen altar and He no longer answered by Urim and Thummim.
- e. While Israel did return from their exile, rebuilt the temple and worshiped again, all of this was without the visible presence of God in their midst. Israel's Divine King was **departed**.

IV. The Transfer of Political Supremacy to Gentile Powers

- a. From the initial coming of the Glory at Sinai to its departure from Jerusalem, the Mediatorial Kingdom had endured for approximately **eight** centuries.
- b. During that time, Israel went down in defeat only when she turned aside from the path of the divinely written charter of her kingdom. But under Zedekiah, the cup of Israel's iniquity was filled up till there was **no remedy**. 2 Chron 36:16 *But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. NIV*
- c. The end came quickly, indicated by at least three significantly related events, all occurring in the short space of about **twelve** years.
 - 1. In 603 BC God authorized the **transfer** of world supremacy to the Gentile power of Babylon which would be followed by Greece and then Rome in an unbroken succession. Dan 2:37-38 *You, O king, are the king of kings. The God of heaven has given you dominion and power and might and glory; 38 in your hands he has placed mankind and the beasts of the field and the birds of the air. Wherever they live, he has made you ruler over them all. NIV*
 - 2. In 597 BC Jeremiah pronounces the divine ban putting an end to the line of **succession** of Solomon's family to the throne of Israel. Jer 22:30 *This is what the LORD says: "Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah." NIV*
 - 3. The Mediatorial Kingdom of Israel was officially terminated by the departure of the Shekinah Glory which was dated by Ezekiel in the sixth year of Jehoiachin (**591 BC**)

V. Why The Mediatorial Kingdom of History Failed

- a. Many commentators suggest that the kingdom failed due to a lack of spiritual preparation on the part of the **people**. They reason that governments fail when people are not inwardly in harmony with their national constitution and laws.
- b. A second reason offered is that the OT kingdom failed due to the moral and ethical imperfections of the **rulers** through whom the kingdom was mediated.
- c. These explanations may tell us why kingdoms and states initiated by men for their own purposes fail, but they **do not** adequately explain the failure of a supernatural kingdom initiated by God. Some other explanation must be made.
- d. There is **one** central factor that explains why the Mediatorial Kingdom of God failed to materialize in ancient Israel and why it is not observed in history to this day.
- e. The only explanation which grants to God His due sovereignty and omnipotence is that the full manifestation of the Kingdom was **never intended** by God to materialize until Messiah reigns. To this day it has not been His timing.
- f. Secondarily, our **understanding** of what the Kingdom is and what it should look like is only seen through a glass darkly and imperfectly so that it may be said that we are looking for one thing and God may be producing quite another.

VI. Application

- a. In a manner similar to how God used the events and circumstance of Israel's history to accomplish His plan, He is doing a like work in us individually.
 - 1. Can you identify circumstance and situations in your life that He is using to sanctify you?
 - 2. To what extent can you identify specific areas that He is strengthening? Weakening?
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- b. The departure of Jehovah marked a change in His theocratic relation to His people, a change that continues _____.
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