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Christ On David's Throne Is Now Reigning

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CHRIST on . . .
DAVID'S THRONE
IS NOW REIGNING

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By **JOHN T. HINDS**

Why This Tract?

The purpose of this tract is to give a plain, kind, and scriptural discussion of the question: Is Christ now reigning on David's throne? It is the author's desire that those interested in knowing just when Christ began his reign as king may be aided by this study in reaching a correct and satisfactory conclusion; moreover, a conclusion the certainty of which will remove much of the disturbance that has arisen in the church over the question. As divine authority is final on such subjects, the appeal for proof will be to the Bible exclusively.

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The Question Explained

The subject of Christ on David's throne involves the truthfulness of certain prophecies. If these have failed to be fulfilled, that fact really destroys his claims as Prophet, Priest, and King. The question as to whether or not he occupies these three offices is, therefore, of vital importance. It should be met candidly and fairly, for the salvation of mankind is involved in it.

That Christ's kingdom was set up on Pentecost after his resurrection has been the generally accepted view of the church of Christ. In hundreds of cases it has been affirmed in public discussion with satisfactory results. To admit that Christ's kingdom was established on Pentecost and deny that he began to reign at that time is neither logical nor scriptural. It is not really meeting

the kingdom issue fairly unless one frankly admits or denies the establishment of the kingdom on Pentecost. A denial of this fact, however, brings one in conflict with many passages of scripture. This is not pleasant. Some who advocate a future kingdom apparently feel the force of coming into this conflict and take a different course. The turn taken is to admit that the kingdom began on Pentecost, and is the same as the church *in some sense*, but does not have Christ in it reigning on David's throne. The following pages are intended to show that this contention conflicts with the plain teaching of the scriptures. It is self-evident that, if Christ is on a throne, he is reigning; and, conversely, if reigning, he is on a throne. If it be admitted that Christ's kingdom and reign began in some sense on Pentecost, yet denied that he is on David's throne, he must be on some other throne; for throne and reign mutually imply each other. From any viewpoint the premillennial kingdom theory demands a denial of Christ's being on David's throne now. For, if he is, all arguments in favor of premillennialism must be rejected as false. It is wholly unreasonable to say that Christ must come back to earth in person to *begin* doing what he is doing now.

The Church Exists Now

The existence of the church is conceded by all. In figurative language the church is compared with several earthly institutions. These comparisons are parallel with that in which the church is called the kingdom; hence, imply the existence of the kingdom by teaching the same facts and truths. The following examples are proof:

1. The relationship of Christ and the church is represented by that of husband and wife. (Eph. 5: 22-33.) Verse 32 says so plainly. Of this relationship Paul says: "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church." (Verse 23.) He also says: "But as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives also be to their husbands in everything." (Verse 24.) The husband rules through love. Likewise Christ rules the church through his law by the principle of love, and nothing can destroy the fact that he is exercising that rule now. That is another way of saying he reigns as King, for all know his reign must be through law prompted by love.

2. The church is the army of the Lord. This truth is fully sustained by the facts that Christians are called soldiers (2 Tim. 2: 3), their armor is described (Eph. 6: 13-17), and they are told to "war the good warfare" (1 Tim. 1: 18). In this illustration Jesus is the "captain" of our salvation. (Heb. 2: 10.) This means that he is our "commander," which is only another way of saying ruler. Calling him King would change the viewpoint, but not the fact.

3. The church is said to be the body (Eph. 1: 22, 23; Col. 1: 18), and Paul refers to it as the "one body" (Eph. 2: 16; 1 Cor. 12: 13). This statement is not denied, for a simple reading of these texts is sufficient. The human body is used to illustrate the church. The apostle means that things true of the church spiritually are similar to things true in a human body. (1 Cor. 12: 12-31.) One striking similarity is the relationship of the head to the body. This represents Christ's relationship to the church. "And he is the head of the body, the church." (Col. 1: 18.) The head rules the body, and that is precisely what Christ does for the church. What objection, then, can be raised logically against saying the head "reigns" over the body? Simply none, for that is just what it does. More than that, the head reigns as an absolute monarch. The only limit is lack of physical power to put its decisions into effect. Since no one denies that the church is now in existence, then it must be true that Christ, as head, is reigning over the church. As certain as Christ is head of the body—a fact not disputed—then he rules the body. This exercise of authority is admitted by all. If Christ is not related to the institution he established, as a King ruling his subjects, then somebody ought to point out the difference between the authority he now exercises over his subjects—members of the church—and the kind of authority he will exercise as a King at some later date.

That he began his rule or reign over the church when he ascended is the plain import of Paul's words in Eph. 1: 19-23. The statement is that Jesus at God's right hand is "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Verse 21.) Is not this all the power and authority a King has? Peter says of his present position: "Angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Pet. 3: 22.)

As head of the church, Christ is now above all *rule, authority, dominion, and power*. Men and angels, the living and the dead, are subject to him. All this is equivalent to saying that he is now *reigning* as King.

If the church and kingdom are the same *in some sense* (the view of some), then Christ is actually reigning in that sense. If an actual reigning king, then denying that he is on David's throne is purely an arbitrary assertion.

4. The church is also called "a holy nation, a people for God's own possession." (1 Pet. 2: 9.) This comparison cannot be misunderstood either in the nature of the illustration or the fact that it applies to the church, for verse ten says, "Who in time past were no people, but now are the people of God." Unquestionably the word "nation" carries the idea of rulership. There are three general forms of nations—republics, empires, and kingdoms. Jesus is nowhere called president or emperor, but he is called a King. By the consent of all the "people of God" were the church when Peter wrote. They were a nation and, therefore, the kingdom, since the nation that Christ rules must be a kingdom. If Christ has not been a reigning king since Pentecost, then we have a kingdom without a king, which is directly in conflict with what is admittedly true when the church is called the one body with Christ as its head or ruler.

The Kingdom Also Exists Now

The foregoing facts show that it is logical to call the church the kingdom. That it is the kingdom in fact is evident from scriptural statements. If so, the kingdom has existed since Pentecost.

1. Jesus predicted the coming of the kingdom. He said: "There are some here of them that stand by, who shall in no wise taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9: 1.) Matthew reports the same matter and says, "Till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom." (Matt. 16: 28.) The Son of man is Christ; hence, it is the kingdom of both Christ and God. It was established before all those standing in Christ's presence died, or else the prediction of Jesus is false. Who will dare say our Lord was a false prophet?

2. Christ said to Peter: "I will build my church. . . . I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven." Since the church is not a material building, the word *keys* must be used figuratively. Literal keys give authority to open and close doors—to admit into or exclude from buildings. Here the word is used to indicate that Peter had authority to express the terms of admission into the kingdom. This was to be done while Peter was on earth. You cannot open doors to a material building that does not exist; neither can you admit people into a kingdom unless it exists. This passage proves the church to be the kingdom, or Peter used the wrong keys; and also proves it was in existence while Peter lived.

3. Paul said that people had been translated "into the kingdom of the Son of his love." (Col. 1: 13.) John said that Jesus "made us to be a kingdom," and that he was then a brother and partaker with the saints "in the tribulation and kingdom and patience which are in Jesus." (Rev. 1: 5, 6, 9.) Misunderstanding these statements is out of the question. If the kingdom did not then exist, Paul and John failed to state facts. They said the Christians of their day were in the kingdom. Denying its existence then is equivalent to rejecting these scriptures as false. A daring thing truly!

4. Finally, Jesus made the following promise to the apostles: "And I appoint unto you a kingdom, even as my Father appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom." (Luke 22: 29, 30.) The Lord's Supper is the only table at which his people eat. This table, as all agree, is in the church. If the church has been established, then the kingdom has, for the same table could not be in two different institutions at the same time. As the apostles received this promise, the kingdom must have been in existence in their day or they could not have eaten at the Lord's table. If the kingdom does not exist, no one has the right to partake of the Lord's Supper. Every time the supper is observed, the participants proclaim the existence of the kingdom. Paul says the Lord's Supper is to "proclaim the Lord's death till he come." (1 Cor. 11: 26.) The purpose of the supper will not exist after the Lord returns. If then it is to be in the kingdom at all, it must be before he comes. This destroys the contention that Christ will establish the kingdom when he comes.

5. Features of the kingdom that are mentioned fix its present existence beyond doubt. Note the following:

(1) The word of God is "the seed" of the kingdom. (Luke 8: 10, 11; Matt. 13: 19.) It is the purpose of seed to perpetuate what already has been created. Since we have the seed of the kingdom—God's word—we have the kingdom.

(2) The "keys" of the kingdom have already been used by the apostle Peter. (Matt. 16: 19.)

(3) In the parable of the tares Jesus says the "good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one." (Matt. 13: 38.) Christians, like good seed sown in the earth, perpetuate the kingdom as children perpetuate the family or nation. This they could not do, unless the kingdom does exist.

(4) David was anointed several years before he began to reign. (1 Sam. 16: 13.) At that time he received a miraculous measure of God's Spirit. He was again anointed when he began to reign over Judah and Israel. (2 Sam. 2: 4; 5: 3-5.) Likewise Christ, who was to receive David's throne, was anointed "with the Holy Spirit and with power" at his baptism three and a half years before he began to reign. (Acts 10: 38; Luke 4: 18.) He was also anointed "with the oil of gladness." (Heb. 1: 9.) This was evidently when he was placed above his fellows and began his spiritual reign at God's right hand.

(5) Jesus has already been crowned with "glory and honor." (Heb. 2: 9.) Those crowned are reigning. Crown is a word that indicates the exercise of ruling as a king.

(6) We now have Christ as head of the body, ruler, Prince. (Acts 5: 31). In Acts 17: 6, 7 Paul was charged with preaching Jesus as a king. Luke recorded it without criticism; the charge then must have been true.

How much more would we need to prove that Christ is now actually reigning in his kingdom? No necessary item has been omitted.

Christ on the Throne

1. Let us inquire first as to what is meant by the word "throne." Literally it means a special seat or chair which one occupies as ruler; an emblem of authority to govern. Rulers generally use one on formal occasions, but they exercise their authority at other times when not

sitting upon a literal throne. The actual authority is vested in the ruler; the outward symbols only signify his right to exercise it. For this reason the word "throne" is also used in a figurative sense to mean *kingly power, royalty*. In a spiritual kingdom the word throne must be used to indicate the ruling of the king, not some kind of material seat. This is precisely the fact when Christ is represented as ruling the church like a human head rules the body. His throne simply means his authority to rule his people. Unquestionably he exercises that authority now; hence, must be a reigning king.

2. Christ receives the kingdom. This fact is taught in the parable of the pounds. (Luke 19: 11-27.) This means, of course, that he was invested with authority to rule—became a reigning king. That is just what the Jews expected him to do in restoring the national kingdom to Israel. In no other sense could he, or any other Jew, have received the kingdom of Israel. Christ could not receive his kingdom until the Jewish kingdom had been abolished on account of their killing him. (Matt. 21: 38-43.) In the change of kingdoms, God's government passed from national to spiritual Israel. As the kingdom changed in nature, it went to a different kind of people. God's people are no longer Jews outwardly, but inwardly. (Rom. 2: 28, 29.)

The Jews expected their promised Messiah to redeem Israel (Luke 24: 21) and sit upon David's literal throne. As Jesus was near Jerusalem, the multitudes with him expected him to declare his authority and be proclaimed a ruling king when he reached the city. He spake the parable to correct their false idea that the kingdom was "immediately to appear." (Luke 19: 11.) The parable says "a certain nobleman went into a far country, to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return." (Verse 12.) In verse 15 it says, "When he was come back again, having received the kingdom." Clearly the nobleman represents Christ, and the far country represents heaven, for that is where Christ went. Whatever else may be said one fact is completely settled; namely, Christ received the kingdom—was invested with reigning power—after he went to heaven. He went there to receive it, he will have it when he returns. This is final on where he became ruler.

Parables and their applications are not alike in every feature, because one is material and the other spiritual.

It is true that, if one were forced to go to a foreign potentate to be clothed with authority to reign over his own country, he would return to do it. That would be true because of its being an earthly kingdom. However, Jesus does not represent the nobleman of the parable as doing that. He is represented not as returning to reign, but to reward his servants and punish his enemies; in other words, to judge both classes. This is exactly the way Christ's second coming is presented in the Bible. There are several reasons why the parable does not teach that Christ will return to reign. (1) Paul says that "our citizenship is in heaven." (Phil. 3: 20.) This means that the capital city—the dwelling place of our king—is heaven. He also said the saints were "fellow-citizens." (Eph. 2: 19.) (2) The nobleman comes to reward his servants for their faithfulness in his absence. Ten and five cities would harmonize with rewards in an earthly kingdom, but not true in a spiritual one. These statements are in the parable, not in the application. They teach that Christ's servants will be properly rewarded when he comes. What the rewards will be will not be known till he comes. (1 John 3: 2.) (3) The nobleman's enemies were slain when he returned; Christ's enemies will be banished when he returns for the judgment. (Matt. 25: 31-46.)

As Christ came in his power when his kingdom came in the lifetime of some who heard him (Mark 9: 1; Matt. 16: 28), the lesson on rewards will also apply to his personal followers and the Jews. When his kingdom was established, he gave his disciples such positions in it as their faithfulness and qualifications deserved (Eph. 4: 8), and fleshly Israel was rejected (Matt. 21: 43; Gal. 3: 28, 29; 4: 24-31). This view is also final as proof that Christ's reign began on Pentecost when he gave gifts to certain ones of his disciples. (1 Cor. 12: 28-31.)

3. Whose throne does Christ occupy? This question, which is answered both prophetically and historically, presents the vital issue in this discussion. God promised David that his house and kingdom should be made sure and his throne established forever. (2 Sam. 7: 12-17.) That meant that God's loving-kindness would never be taken from David as it was from Saul (verse 15); or, the kingdom would never pass to another family. Sin might cause his descendants to be dethroned, but they only could ever rule over Israel, either nationally or

spiritually. This promise was confirmed by God's oath, and David's house and throne declared to be as sure as the sun and moon in the heavens. (Psalm 89: 34-37.) Isaiah refers to Christ when he says his government shall have no end "upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom." (Isa. 9: 6, 7.)

The throne of David is also the throne of God and the throne of any descendant of David who might rule in either the national or spiritual kingdom. David said of his son Solomon: "He shall come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead." (1 Kings 1: 35.) The following describes Solomon's position after David's death: "And Solomon sat upon the throne of David his father." (1 Kings 2: 12.) Regarding the same thing we read: "Then Solomon sat on the throne of Jehovah as king instead of David his father." (1 Chron. 29: 23.) It is also called "his," that is, Solomon's throne. (1 Kings 1: 37, 47.) The same throne was Jehovah's, David's, and Solomon's. It was called Jehovah's because he gave it to David; David's because it was limited to David's family; Solomon's because he, as David's son, sat upon it. This is too simple to be misunderstood and too certain to be denied or rejected. In fact, a denial of it would be absurd.

All the foregoing is also true of the spiritual throne; the same throne is God's, David's, and Christ's. The Jews understood that the Messiah was to be a son of David, as their answer to Christ indicates. (Matt. 21: 41-45.) Paul said that Christ was to be "of the seed of David according to the flesh." (Rom. 1: 3.) Only in this way was he entitled to David's throne. The angel told Mary that "the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." (Luke 1: 32.) Since God promised to *give unto him* the throne of his father David, then the same throne must be his, David's and the Father's, just as it was in the case of Solomon in the national kingdom. This would be true regardless of when the kingdom was established or when Christ sat down upon his throne. There is no possible way to prevent its being a *gift* of God and to one in the family of David.

God and Christ are one in some vital senses (John 17: 21, 22), yet equally distinct in other senses. The same may be said concerning the kingdom and the throne. Paul refers to our final inheritance as being "in the kingdom of Christ and God." (Eph. 5: 5.) Yet Paul

also says that when Christ has abolished all rule, authority, and power "he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father." (1 Cor. 15: 24.) In reference to heaven John said: "And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein." (Rev. 22: 3.) Because God and Christ are one in saving men, the kingdom may be said to be the kingdom of each, though the reign in that kingdom is now granted to Christ and will be delivered back to the Father when Christ returns. There is no other way to harmonize all the passages.

The Pentecost kingdom, which some premillennialists admit does exist, is called the kingdom of God. (Luke 8: 2, 10; Mark 1: 14; 4: 30; John 35.) It is also called Christ's kingdom. He said "my kingdom" (John 18: 36), and Paul calls it the "kingdom of the Son of his love" (Col. 1: 13). If the kingdom is God's and Christ's at the same time, which is true or these scriptures are false, then the same would necessarily be true of the throne in that kingdom. So in the Pentecost kingdom, the one that we know exists now, Christ sits upon his own throne. If so, upon David's throne, for that is what the prophet and angel said he should have.

4. The location of David's throne. The place of his national throne was in Jerusalem, the capital city; that of his spiritual throne is in heaven where our citizenship is. (Phil. 3: 21.)

David himself represents God as saying: "Jehovah saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110: 1.) The expression "at thy right hand" is repeated immediately after referring to the same person as a priest "after the order of Melchizedek." (Verses 4, 5.) This expression the New Testament definitely applies to Christ. (Heb. 6: 20.) In addition to what is said in the New Testament about Christ's priesthood, it is also very clearly shown that Psalm 110: 1 has its fulfillment in Christ. (Heb. 1: 13.) When Jesus, or one of his inspired writers, applies an Old Testament prophecy, that application is final regarding its New Testament meaning. In Psalm 16: 8-10 the position of Christ at God's right hand is also predicted. This is made certain by the fact that Peter on Pentecost quotes and so applies that very expression. (Acts 2: 25-28.) In presenting the fact that Christ had to be David's son, Jesus himself quotes this prophecy. (Luke 20: 41-43.) Moreover, Jesus said that he would

sit at God's right hand: "And ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14: 62.) Paul testifies that Jesus is at God's right hand, which means that the prophecies on that point have been fulfilled. (Rom. 8: 34; Eph. 1: 20; Col. 3: 1.)

(1) The record shows that Christ, at God's right hand, is a supreme ruler. Peter told the Jewish council that God had exalted him "to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and remission of sins." (Acts 5: 31.) Of course the remission of sins here means absolute remission—that which was promised in the commission (Mark 16: 16). The point is that Jesus was exalted to God's right hand for that work to begin. The Greek word for "Prince" means leader, author, or captain, any one of which implies that Christ is a ruler with authority to control his followers. They are but different ways of expressing the truth that Christ reigns over his subjects.

(2) Paul declares that because of Jesus' humility and obedience God "highly exalted him," gave him a name above every name, and will require every knee to bow and every tongue to confess that Jesus is Lord. (Phil. 2: 9-11.) Moreover, Paul also says that God "made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion." (Eph. 1: 19-21.) Peter says Christ is on the right hand of God, "angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Pet. 3: 22.) What more could be necessary for one to be a king? No one under the title "king" could have more authority. If Christ is not now a king, he has all the prerogatives he could have in being such. Where, pray, is the advantage of denying the name to that which in fact does exist? Especially no denial should be made when Paul says that God "delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." (Col. 1: 13.)

(3) The record shows that Christ is now reigning. This is implied in the statement that he is *above* all rule, authority, and dominion. But the direct proof is found in 1 Cor. 15: 25. The verse reads thus: "For he must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." Paul immediately adds (verse 26) that "the last enemy that shall be abolished is death." In Rev. 20: 11-15 we have a vivid picture of the final judgment when death will be abolished—"cast into the lake of fire." (Verse

14.) Since "all" enemies are to be abolished, and death is the last one, then Christ must reign till death no longer reigns over men. That means till the time for the final judgment. But we are told by David, Christ, Peter, and the writer of Hebrews that Jesus is to sit at God's right hand till his enemies are made the footstool of his feet. (Psalm 110: 1; Luke 20: 42, 43; Acts 2: 34, 35; Heb. 10: 12, 13.) Since his enemies are to be put under his feet while he reigns, and the same thing is to be done while he sits at God's right hand, the sitting and reigning are coextensive—begin and end at the same time. Since death will not be abolished till the final judgment, Christ will sit at God's right hand till that time. There will be no place for his reigning after he comes. It follows, therefore, that if he is not a reigning king now, he never will be. This argument shows that Christ did not begin his reign till after his ascension and will end it when he returns. It destroys two false doctrines. One is the anti-Pentecost kingdom, the other is the premillennial-future-kingdom theory. As he must *reign* while he is doing exactly the thing he is to do while sitting at God's right hand, where he now is, the conclusion is irresistible that he is now reigning. If now reigning, he is on the throne; hence, the throne is in heaven. Since it was David's throne that was promised, David's throne is now in heaven. All this simply means that Christ, a descendant of David, is reigning in heaven.

(4) Peter gives additional proof. His sermon on Pentecost was to convince the Jews that God had made Jesus "both Lord and Christ"—the anointed ruler. He appealed to David's prophecy that the coming one was to dwell at God's right hand after being raised from the dead without corruption. (Acts 2: 25-28.) He then reasons that since David had not been raised the prophecy could not refer to him. David knew that God made a promise, confirmed by his oath, that he would set one upon his throne; and, being a prophet, he foresaw that the promise had reference to the resurrection of Christ. Next Peter affirms that he had been raised and exalted and was then at God's right hand, where he was to remain *till* his enemies were made the footstool of his feet. If Peter did not mean that Christ was then on David's throne, his argument, based on David's words, is delusive and calculated to deceive the most careful Bible student.

Confirmatory Proof

THE PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

1. Christ's priesthood, like his kingship, is a matter of prophecy. David himself mentions the fact in these words: "Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent: thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (Psalm 110: 4.) There can be no doubt that this text refers to Christ, for the New Testament so applies it. (Heb. 5: 6; 6: 20.) The following from Zechariah evidently also refers to Christ: "Behold, the man whose name is the Branch . . . shall build the temple of Jehovah; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne; and the counsel of peace shall be between them both." Zech. 6: 12, 13.) That Christ is now our high priest, at God's right hand, is one of the plainest teachings of the New Testament. (See Heb. 2: 17; 8: 1; 9: 11.) Hence, the prophecies relating to his priesthood have already been fulfilled, and he is now officiating in such capacity.

2. Christ's priestly service is not on earth. This is the clear meaning of Heb. 8: 4. The Jewish tabernacle had two apartments, holy and most holy. The services in the first were attended to by the priests daily, but into the second only the high priest went once a year. (Heb. 9: 1-7.) The holy place represents the church, for Christians who are in the church are called priests. (1 Pet. 2: 5.) The most holy place represents heaven where Christ went once. (Heb. 9: 24-26.) On the cross Jesus was the "Lamb of God"—a sacrifice for the sins of the world; as high priest he offered his blood in heaven (Heb. 9: 12, 24). His death was not a priestly act on his part; the offering of his blood to the Father was. After that offering was made, he "sat down on the right hand of God." (Heb. 10: 12.) Since he performed no priestly act till after his ascension, we must accept as true the inspired words that, "if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all." (Heb. 8: 4.) Since Christ is now our high priest in heaven, and cannot be one on earth, his priestly services must end when he leaves heaven. His priesthood, therefore, will continue from the time he offered his blood to the Father till his return to the earth. As already pointed out, that happens to be the exact length of time he must reign. (1 Cor. 15: 25.) According to the prophecy (Zech. 6: 13) the priesthood

and kingship were to exist at the same time; according to New Testament teaching they are both in existence now, and are to end at the same time.

3. A change of priesthood occurred. Note the following facts:

Under the Jewish law the two positions of king and priest could not be united in one person, but in Christ they are thus united. According to the law, priests had to come from the tribe of Levi. Jesus, being of the tribe of Judah, could not have become a priest in that system. For this assertion we have the express statement of Heb. 7: 13, 14. This fact required that a change be made in the kind of priesthood. Verse 12 shows that such a change was a necessity, and it required also a change of the law. The fact that Christ's priesthood was "after the order of Melchizedek" is stated several times. (Heb. 5: 6; 6: 20; 7: 17.) Two distinguishing facts mark the priesthood of Melchizedek: (1) He was represented as being "without father, without mother, without genealogy." (Heb. 7: 3.) Evidently this means that he had no predecessors or successors in office; he alone held the position. The Jewish priests died and others were consecrated in their places. Not so with Christ; for he, like Melchizedek, has none to follow him in office. He, therefore, abides forever in an unchangeable priesthood. (Heb. 7: 23, 24.) (2) Melchizedek was both king and priest. (Gen. 14: 18.) Christ is both King and Priest, for he is plainly declared to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. As both Old and New Testaments state that Melchizedek was king and priest (Gen. 14: 18; Heb. 7: 1-4), the fact that Christ is a priest after the Melchizedek order certainly implies that he, too, is King and Priest at the same time. There is no question about Christ being a priest since Pentecost. That being true, there is no place for doubt that he has been a reigning King since that time.

Zechariah (6: 12) said that "the man whose name is the Branch" was to "build the temple of Jehovah." If the one referred to as the "Branch," "stock" and "shoot" of Jesse means Christ, the question is settled beyond even a respectable quibble that Jesus is now on David's throne; for, he is unquestionably an acting high priest. Isa. 11: 1-5 describes the "branch" of Jesse in such exalted language as will fit none but Christ. In verse 10 the prophet mentions the great person again, and Paul quotes this verse and applies it to Christ. (Rom. 15: 12.) This

is final proof that the "man whose name is the Branch" means Christ. According to the prophecy he was to "sit and rule" upon his throne, and to be "a priest upon his throne." If this does not mean that he is now officiating as Priest and reigning as King, words cannot be depended upon to express anything with certainty.

Zechariah was commanded to take crowns and set them upon the head of Joshua the high priest. This crowning of Joshua was only a symbolic matter, for under the law only Levites could become priests, and kings, unless God's oath to David was vain, must come from Judah only. Jehovah further said: "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." This is additional proof that both priesthood and kingship were united in one—Jesus Christ—and fixes the beginning of his reign at Pentecost. Unless this is true, the whole Melchizedek priesthood idea may as well be abandoned.

"THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID"

The apostle James quotes from the prophet Amos a statement regarding the rebuilding of the "tabernacle of David." (Amos 9: 11, 12; Acts 15: 16-18.) These passages have a direct bearing on the time of Christ's reign.

1. The meaning of tabernacle. The word "tabernacle" literally means a tent or building of some kind in which people may dwell, temporarily or permanently. That the word is sometimes used in a figurative sense is evident from Heb. 9: 1-3, where the holy place of the Jewish tabernacle represents the church and the most holy represents heaven. (See verse 24.) That the tabernacle of David could not refer to the literal house in which he lived is evident from the fact that such application of it here would be utterly foolish. The word "house" often means *family*, as, for example, 1 Tim. 3: 5; Acts 16: 34. The "house of God" is also called the "church of the living God." (1 Tim. 3: 15.) God's house, or church, is God's family. In like manner, David's house, tent, or tabernacle, is David's family. The rebuilding of David's tabernacle, then, was to restore David's family to a position it occupied before its fall; that is, some one of his descendants would be made a reigning king. As a fleshly family his house needed no rebuilding, for it had never gone out of existence. Jesus was his blood descendant. The only sense in which it could be rebuilt was for its kingly power

to be restored by a son of David becoming ruler. Anything else fails utterly to square with the plain facts.

With the Babylonian captivity of Judah the tabernacle of David fell—its royal rulership was lost—for no descendant of David ever sat upon the Jewish throne after that. Christ refused to gratify the Jews' desire for the restoration of their national kingdom, and declared that his kingdom was not of this world. (John 18: 36.) As the scriptures clearly teach that he was to have the throne of his father David, it must be that David's tabernacle was rebuilt when Jesus established a spiritual kingdom. Not children of the flesh, but of the promise are "reckoned for a seed." (Rom. 9: 8.)

2. The argument made by James. Acts 15: 1-29 gives account of the council of Jerusalem regarding the necessity of requiring the Gentile converts to be "circumcised after the custom of Moses." Paul and Barnabas related what had been done in their work among the Gentiles. Peter then explained how God had made choice of him to preach the gospel to the Gentiles using language that shows he refers to the conversion of Cornelius and his household. (Verses 6-11.) Paul and Barnabas had already reported to the church in Antioch that God "had opened a door of faith unto the Gentiles." (Acts 14: 27.) We have, then, the unmistakable testimony of both Paul and Peter that the Gentiles had been granted the privilege of obedience. James' comment is that God had "visited the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15: 14.) Next James says, "And to this agree the words of the prophets"—that is, the general teaching of the prophets is that the Gentiles were to be called. Then to prove that Peter had done the right thing in receiving the Gentiles, James quotes the prophecy from Amos. If he did not mean to prove by the prophecy that Peter did right in admitting the Gentiles into the church, there is no point whatever in making the quotation. Since he was quoting the passage to prove that point, if the passage does not prove it, then we have an inspired apostle making a misapplication of the Scripture. Any one whose reasoning puts the apostle in such a predicament is certainly not a safe teacher.

The plain statement is that the tabernacle of David was to be rebuilt, "that the residue of men may seek after the Lord." The "residue" of men means the Gentiles, who are mentioned in the next expression. Since the rebuild-

ing was to be done so that the Gentiles might seek the Lord, and the Gentiles had already been received, then the rebuilding of the tabernacle had already taken place. This is absolutely the fact, unless James is to be charged with false logic and a misapplication of the prophecy. Who is prepared to make such a charge? The tabernacle could not have been restored unless a descendant of David was placed upon his throne. Hence, Jesus was upon David's throne when Peter received Cornelius into the church.

The words "after these things" (verse 16) belong to the prophecy of Amos. They are James' divine interpretation of "in that day," the expression used by Amos. The thing referred to is that God would "sift the house of Israel among all the nations, like as grain is sifted in a sieve" (Amos 9: 9, 10); yet the good grain—individual Jews who would obey—would not be lost. "In that day" after that sifting—the tabernacle would be rebuilt. The sifting began with the captivity of the two kingdoms and continued through the centuries; they had no king up till Christ came. Any other view forces one to deny the purpose for which James quoted the prophet. The argument is decisive and final.

"SURE BLESSINGS OF DAVID"

God promised Abraham that through his seed all nations should be blessed. (Gen. 22: 15-18.) Jesus is declared to be that promised seed. (Gal. 3: 8, 16; Acts 3: 25, 26.) Paul says that the promise made unto the fathers God had fulfilled "in that he hath raised up Jesus . . . from the dead." (Acts 13: 33, 34.) Jesus, therefore, became the "begotten Son of God," in the sense necessary to fulfill the promise, by his resurrection.

The oath-confirmed covenant or promise that God made with David was that his seed and throne were to be established forever; that is, the line of kings was to come from his family. (Psalm 89: 3, 4, 28, 29, 35-37.) That Christ is the fulfillment of this promise to David is evident from the fact that the angel told Mary that "God shall give unto him the throne of his father David." (Luke 1: 32.) Since Christ was to abide a Priest and King continually, he could not become either till after his resurrection. Paul says that it was "concerning that he raised him up from the dead" that God spake the words, "I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David." (Acts 13: 34.) The word "blessings" is supplied by the trans-

lators, there being no word for it in the original. The thought clearly seems to be this: The holy things promised to David made sure. This was done by his resurrection.

These holy things promised to David included a resurrection before corruption, sitting at God's right hand, sitting on David's throne, being a witness, leader (prince) and commander to the peoples (Isa. 55: 4). Since it is admitted by all that all these promises have been fulfilled except the one about the throne, there can be no reason for denying that it has also. The original promise to David said: "And thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." (2 Sam. 7: 16.) The promise of the throne is an additional statement that expresses the same general idea as house and kingdom. Making the house and kingdom sure made the holy things promised to David sure. Restoring the house (family) of David—putting one of his descendants upon his throne—was the only way it could be done. Since they had the holy things promised to David made sure when Luke wrote Acts 13: 34, then they had the house (family) of David restored; hence, had Christ a reigning king on David's throne. If there should be in the holy promises to David some mercies or blessings yet to be received, that circumstance could not change the fact that the blessings of David already received came through the restoration of David's house. This means the establishment of the kingdom and Christ on his throne.

"THE KEY OF DAVID"

John says that Jesus has "the key of David." (Rev. 3: 7.) Key is a symbol of authority, for one with keys has the authority to open and close doors, admit or prevent entrance into places. Jesus promised Peter the "keys of the kingdom" so that he might bind and loose; that is, state the conditions of entrance into the kingdom. The key of David means his authority which he exercised in reigning in his kingdom. Isaiah 22: 20-22 is proof of this. Eliakim was promised the government of the king's house in place of Shebna and told he should have "the key of the house of David" to open and shut and none to change his decrees; in other words, he was given authority to govern the house. In like manner, Christ in receiving "the key of David" became spiritual ruler of God's house—that is, he was placed upon David's throne.

When Will Christ's Reign End?

1. A direct scriptural answer to this question is found in Acts 3: 20, 21, and reads as follows: "And that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets that have been from of old."

The word "receive" is here used in the sense of *retain*, and the passage evidently refers to the period of time that will elapse between Christ's ascension to heaven and his personal return. Strange as it may seem, this text is adduced in support of exactly opposite views. Somebody must be in error, for no passage of Scriptures teaches contradictory things. One contention is that the "restoration"—whatever it may be—begins after Christ's personal return—that is, he will come to begin this restoring. The other view is that the restoring will be accomplished before he returns in person. Those who insist that the kingdom of Christ (Christ on David's throne) is yet future hold the former view; those who contend that the kingdom has already been established hold the latter view. Since the *things* to be restored are those spoken by the prophets, the "restoration," of necessity, means the fulfillment of their predictions.

Evidently Peter's words cover the entire period from Christ's ascension (when heaven received him) till his personal return. It should also be noted that Peter says the *times* (plural) of restoration. This means that there was to be a succession of things to be restored, and a number of times or seasons for these restorations. The expression "all things" spoken by the prophets also demands a number of times for their fulfillment. This is too evident to be overlooked and too plainly stated to be denied. Its recognition and consideration are vitally necessary to any just application of the passage.

2. What had already occurred? In order to determine whether Christ will come at the *beginning* of the restoration of the "all things" involved, or after its accomplishment, it is vitally important to ask what had already occurred when he spoke the words in Acts 3: 20, 21; for some of the "all things" had been fulfilled, and were being fulfilled at that time. One prophecy referring to Christ's work (the outpouring of the Spirit—Joel 2: 28-32) began to be fulfilled on Pentecost, and Peter was

under its direction when he was preaching the sermon in Acts 3. For this statement we have the express words of Peter himself. (Acts 2: 16, 17, 33.) "This is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel," he said. The Spirit was delivering to the apostles the words of Jesus. (John 16: 13-15.) Another prophecy spoken by David himself said that the Lord was to sit at God's right hand after his resurrection. (Psalm 16: 8-10; 110: 1.) Peter declared on Pentecost that this had also been fulfilled. (Acts 2: 33.) It was confirmed later by him and by the writer of Hebrews. (Acts 5: 31; Heb. 10: 12, 13.) If the kingdom was to be established when "all things" (spoken by the prophets regarding the period from the ascension to his return) *began* to be fulfilled, then it was established on Pentecost beyond any room for doubt; for two of the most vital prophecies were fulfilled on that day. If Christ had to come personally when the kingdom began, then he came on Pentecost. Yet we know that is not true, for Peter said he was at God's right hand.

3. Other prophecies. The admission of the Gentiles into God's favor is an outstanding Old Testament prediction. It was in the promise made to Abraham (Gen. 12: 1-3) and in the following passages: Isa. 2: 2; Amos 9: 11, 12. That they were admitted into his favor a few years after Pentecost is evident from the conversion of Cornelius and the defense of Paul and Barnabas for preaching to Gentiles. (Acts 11: 18; 15: 6-18.) This is another proof that Christ did not come when the restoration began, or when the "all things" began to be fulfilled. The Lord's house (Isa. 2: 2; 1 Tim. 3: 15), the new covenant (Jer. 31: 31-34; Heb. 8: 8-12), and the priesthood of Christ (Zech. 6: 12, 13; Heb. 9: 11-15; 10: 12, 13) are other predictions that had their fulfillment when the work began on Pentecost. The establishment of the kingdom, its spread, the overthrow of pagan Rome, the rise of the papacy and its decline through the reformation are things involved in the second and seventh chapters of Daniel. As they are a part of the "all things" spoken, they must have fulfillment. If any of the "all things" of Acts 3: 21 are in the prophecies of the Old Testament, then they must be fulfilled before Jesus returns; for the expression "heaven must receive *until*" such fulfillment requires all to be fulfilled before he comes. If the millennium is in any of the "all things" spoken by the prophets, it must precede his coming. There can be no conflict between

prophecies of the Old and New Testament; hence, if there be any prophecies of the millennium in the New Testament, they, too, must be fulfilled first. This demands that whatever the millennium may be, it must be understood as a reign through the truth rather than through his personal presence.

4. When all enemies are overcome. For emphasis reference is again made to Peter's statement that Jesus is to sit at God's right hand *till* his enemies are made the footstool of his feet. (Acts 2: 35.) Paul says he "must reign, till he hath put all his enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. 15: 25.) The vital point in these statements, which fairness will not overlook, is that the very work he does while sitting at God's right hand is the work he does while reigning. He is at God's right hand now; hence, reigning now or no dependence can be placed on the meaning of words.

Objections Considered

1. Matt. 25: 31 is offered as proof that Christ will not sit upon David's throne till he comes because the passage refers to a time after his return. If this objection is valid, the passage is in hopeless conflict with the scriptural teaching already presented. This, of course, cannot be. Matt. 25: 31-46 depicts the judgment scene. Hence, it shows Christ *judging* on his throne, not *reigning* on it. The word "throne" means royal authority or power. The exercise of this power in reigning will end when he leaves heaven; in judging it will be when he returns. Both correctly called a "throne" because a symbol of authority. Since the passage presents Christ in the role of Judge instead of Ruler, it shows that, if he is to reign upon David's throne at all, it must be before he returns.

But as this is called the throne "of his glory," it is thought it must be different from the throne he is on now. It is sufficient answer to this to say that Christ is in glory now. (See John 7: 39; 17: 5; 1 Tim. 3: 16; 1 Pet. 1: 21.) He asked two disciples: "Behooved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory?" (Luke 24: 26.) If Christ is now on a throne (this must be admitted by all premillennialists who agree that the kingdom and church are the same in some sense), then

he is *reigning* now in that sense. If so, then it is a throne of glory, and the same upon which he will judge.

2. Rev. 3: 21 is referred to as proof that Christ is now on God's throne but not on David's or his own. It is the language of Jesus and reads thus: "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with me in my throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with my Father in his throne." Note that this text says "with me in my throne." Whether past or future it is Christ's throne; this the text itself says. If the text refers to David also, then it is certain that Christ sits on his own throne while sitting on David's; that is, he inherited the throne from his father David. That is precisely what Solomon did, as already shown. But Solomon sat upon God's throne also. (1 Chron. 29: 23.) But Rev. 3: 21 says that Christ at God's right hand is sitting upon the Father's throne. Then, like Solomon of old, he is also sitting upon his own throne. If so, upon the throne of David as well. Nothing less than a false theory or disregard for plain facts will prevent admitting this truth.

3. Finally, the premillennialist presents Matt. 19: 28 to prove that Christ will not "sit on the throne of his glory" till he comes again, at which time the apostles will sit upon twelve thrones "judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The passage says nothing about his coming personally to *rule* upon the throne of his glory; that is all assumed by future kingdom advocates. We know Christ is now in glory. Matt. 25: 31 is the only verse that mentions his sitting on the throne of his glory after he returns, and that will be when he comes with all his angels to judge the nations, not to reign over them. This is clear from the context (verses 32-46), and from Matt. 16: 27 and 2 Thess. 1: 7-11. The time that Christ will *reign* upon his throne is a period called the "regeneration," according to Matt. 19: 28. The Greek word here translated "regeneration" is used only one other time in the New Testament—Titus 3: 5. There Paul says we are saved "through the washing of regeneration." This expression refers to baptism and unquestionably means that those baptized have become obedient and are saved. If so, they are in the period of regeneration—the time when men are redeemed. As certain as men are scripturally baptized and saved, just that certain they are in the period of regeneration. In that case Christ is sitting upon his throne and his apostles are judging. Remission of sins through

baptism has been since Pentecost; hence, the "regeneration" has existed from that date. Therefore Christ has been sitting on the throne of his glory since that time.

As the Jewish tabernacle, priesthood, and sacrifices typically represent the plan of salvation through Christ, so the "twelve tribes" represent Christians. James so addresses Christians. (James 1: 1.) The apostles are now judging spiritual Israel. The word "thrones" represents their authority to do it. They are authorized by Christ to express and enforce his law. (John 20: 22, 23.) That law is now in force, by it we are required to live and according to it we are to be received or rejected at the judgment. (2 Cor. 5: 10; John 12: 48; Rev. 20: 11, 12.) Christ is now *reigning* at the Father's right hand on David's throne, but will return to *judge* all the nations. After that he will deliver up the kingdom to God—relinquish his own reign to the Father—and the eternal state will be ushered in so that "God may be all in all." (1 Cor. 15: 28.)

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