

The Kingdom of Heaven: Present or Future

Introduction

Is the kingdom of heaven something believers are to look forward to or is it already here? Common thinking is that the kingdom of Elohim is not readily available or accessible in the here and now but is a future entity to be realised when all the earthly kingdoms of our current world come under the reign of Mashiach. But consider the following words of Mashiach,

And from the days of Yochanan the Immerser until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (Matt.11:12).

The Torah and the prophets are until Yochanan. Since then the kingdom of heaven is being announced, and everyone is doing violence upon it. (Luke.16:16).

These words infer that the kingdom of heaven was a physical reality 2000 years ago. This being the case we may ask why is the world still awash with sin and pain? Well! Mashiach answers this question declaring the kingdom has been usurped by violent men. Who these violent men are is not immediately clear, however, their identity may become clearer as we learn more about the kingdom Mashiach is referring to.

Before we get into this study it is important to distinguish between Mashiach's kingdom and Mashiach's millennial rule which is yet to come. If the kingdom of heaven is present today, which the above verses imply, then clearly these two are not one and the same. A further anomaly is that Mashiach talks of two kingdoms of heaven and we need to distinguish between them.

Two Kingdoms: Two Ages

For those who have never realised it, Scripture describes two separate kingdoms which will exist at different times and different ages,

*Then Yahusha sent the multitude away and went into the house: and his disciples came to him, said, explain to us the parable of the tares of the field. He answered and said to them, He that sows the good seed is the Son of man; The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; The enemy that sows them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. **The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.** Who hath ears to hear, let him hear. (Matt.13:36-43).*

So, we have the Kingdom of Mashiach (Son of Man) and the Kingdom of Father YHWH. The above passage says that the unrighteous will be gathered from out of the 'Son's kingdom' and cast into the fiery furnace. This is describing the final judgement when the unrighteous will be permanently removed from YHWH's presence. The passage tells us that after this final judgement the righteous shall reside in the Father's kingdom.

We know that the final judgement will be at the **end** of the Seventh Day; at the **end** of Mashiach's millennial rule. It is at this time that the Son will hand everything back to the Father (1Cor.15:24), hence the Son's kingdom must precede the Father's kingdom. Final judgment is the event that heralds in the 'Eighth Day.' Of the 'Eighth Day' Mashiach says that the righteous will be the same as the heavenly host (Matt.22:30), confirmation of the spiritual nature of the Father's kingdom. However, when describing events in Mashiach's kingdom the prophet Isaiah talks of life, death and living a lifespan as that of the trees, thereby establishing the physical nature of Mashiach's kingdom and those living in the Land throughout the millennium.

No more will babies die in infancy, no more will an old man die short of his days, he who dies at a hundred will be thought young and at less than a hundred thought cursed. And they shall build houses and inhabit them and plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and

another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat. For the days of My people are going to be as the days of a tree, and My chosen ones outlive the work of their hands. (Isa.65:20)

Hence one major difference between these two kingdoms is that Mashiach's kingdom is an earthly physical kingdom whilst the Father's kingdom is a heavenly spiritual kingdom.

Another difference, verified by the earlier passage from Matthew is the presence of unrighteousness in Mashiach's earthly kingdom, which cannot be present in the Father's heavenly kingdom. YHWH expels all unrighteousness from his kingdom, evidenced by Lucifer's expulsion and exclusion from permanent residence amongst YHWH's heavenly host: whereas we are told Mashiach will rule with a rod of iron (Ps.2:9, Rev.12:5). A second Scripture confirming the presence of unrighteous souls in Mashiach's kingdom can be found a few verses later in the same chapter of Matthew,

Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (Matt.13:47-50).

Mashiach spoke repeatedly about the 'Kingdom of Heaven' mostly in parables, introducing each parable with the words, "The Kingdom of Heaven is like....." but we have to discern for ourselves which kingdom He is describing: His earthly physical kingdom or the Father's heavenly spiritual kingdom. If His parable includes unrighteous people, then He must be referring to his earthly kingdom.

The Characteristics of Mashiach's Earthly Kingdom

Consider what is said in Joel,

And after this it shall be that I pour out My Spirit on all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men dream dreams, your young men see visions. (Joel.2:28).

The apostle Peter tells us that this prophecy was initiated at Shavuot when the disciples were imbued with the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), described in Acts chapter 2; specifically verse 6. What would be the purpose of YHWH pouring out his spirit on all flesh other than to build His earthly kingdom? Was the event described in Acts 2 to be interpreted as a single isolated incident without corollary – a sort of damp squib? Not according to Mashiach's command to His disciples,

*"Go make disciples of all nations in My name."*¹ (Matt.28:19)

The Trinitarian concept presented by almost all translations of this verse is the product of manipulation by the RCC. Refer to the footnote below which provides only a fraction of the evidence available.

¹ All scholars recognise, even those of a Catholic following, that the evidence proves the Church tampered with this verse and that the Trinitarian formula of Matt.28:19 can only be found in translations dated after the Church had adopted this doctrine in the fourth century. There is no earlier surviving Greek text before 325AD containing a three-fold immersion of this verse. What is more, all Eusebius' records pre-325 AD, when quoting this verse, never have the Trinitarian baptismal formula. However, his post-325 AD/Nicea quotes all contained the Trinitarian formula. Professor Tabor comments: "Lack of Trinitarian formula for baptism in Matt 28:19-20 is unique [to Shem-Tov] but also seems to be in codices that Eusebius found in Caesarea:" Eusebius quotes (H.E. 3.5.2): 'They went on their way to all the nations teaching their message in the power of Christ for he had said to them, 'Go make disciples of all the nations in my name.'"

Reeves, in his supplemental notes agrees with Tabor saying, in addition, Eusebius apparently was relying upon the original Hebrew Matthew, either directly or indirectly, when his first 17 quotes from Matthew's ending all omitted the Trinitarian formula. For Eusebius lived in Caesarea, and Eusebius mentions one Pamphilus as his source for Matthew. Then, when we compare that fact against a contemporary writing from Jerome ca 400 AD, about the original Hebrew Matthew that 'most believe' was written by Matthew, we read that Jerome said it was in the Library at Caesarea, and one Pamphilus had carefully "collected it" --apparently meaning made well-known extracts from it. These sources below (*not included in this footnote*) prove these facts. Hence, most likely Eusebius was reading Pamphilus' extract from the Hebrew Matthew written by Apostle Matthew, and hence Matthew 28 originally lacked the Trinitarian formula. (Stanford Reeves: Original Gospel of Matthew Vol.2).

Make no mistake the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit) is as virulent today as when received by the disciples at Shavuot. What was initiated at Shavuot with the apostles was just the start of the salvation process. Matt.28:19 is clear: the Gospel message – ‘that salvation through Mashiach Yahusha is available to all,’ was to be a universal message and to be preached until Mashiach’s return. This message and the Kingdom of Heaven are one and the same. This being the case we must ask just what and where is the Kingdom of Heaven? Well! Mashiach does give us the answer but rather than jump to the end, let us first get some history behind the origin of the Kingdom of Heaven starting with the house of Ya’akov a.k.a. Israel. It is important to start with Israel because the apostle says that for salvation believers must be enjoined with Israel, what he describes as being ‘grafted into Israel’ (Rom.11), thus our destiny has to be the same as Israel’s destiny.

A Brief Synopsis of the history of the House of Ya’akov (The Twelve Tribes)

We are all aware of the division of the House of Ya’akov in 930 BC into a northern kingdom of ten tribes; house of Israel and a southern kingdom of two tribes; house of Yehudah (Judah). The reasons for this split between the tribes is described in 1Kings 12 and from what is recorded one could be forgiven for excluding YHWH from the picture. But YHWH leaves us in no doubt that He was behind this separation,

“For I shall no longer spare the inhabitants of the land,” declares YHWH. “But see, I am delivering up mankind, each one into his neighbour’s hand and into the hand of his sovereign. And they shall crush the earth, but I do not deliver from their hand. So, I shepherded the flock meant for slaughter, the truly poor of the flock. And I took for myself two staffs, the one I called Pleasantness, and the other I called Unity, and I shepherded the flock. Then I sent off the three shepherds in one month, for my being despised them, and their being also loathed me. So, I said, ‘I am not shepherding you. Let the dying die, and the straying stray, and let those who are left eat each other’s flesh.’ And I took my staff, Pleasantness, and cut it in two, to break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples. So, it was broken on that day. And the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of YHWH. And I said to them, ‘If it is good in your eyes, give me my wages. And if not, refrain.’ So, they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And YHWH said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter,’ the splendid price at which I was valued by them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the House of YHWH for the potter. Then I cut in two my other staff, Unity, to break the brotherhood between Yehudah and Israel. (Zech.11:6-14).

Note: many translations talk of a renewed covenant when referring to Jer.31 and Mashiach’s words. But this passage is unequivocal: the covenant between YHWH and the whole house of Ya’akov was broken i.e. ended. You cannot renew a covenant that has been brought to an end particularly a blood cut covenant such as this was.

So here we have it, YHWH clearly takes responsibility for dividing the House of Ya’akov into two kingdoms, each of which was to serve a very separate purpose. The southern kingdom Yehudah would spawn Mashiach and thus, to fulfil prophesy they had to remain in the Land (albeit via a temporary exile of 70 years in Babylon). Ultimately, they would call for Mashiach’s execution. I am sure the reference to thirty pieces of silver in the above passage is not lost on you. The northern kingdom a.k.a. Israel or Ephraim where destined to remain in exile and spread the word of YHWH across the globe. Thus, is the situation of the Jewish people today.

It was approximately 215 years after the nation split into two kingdoms, that the ten northern tribes were exiled from the land when, around 720 BC the northern tribes were exiled to Assyria, leaving only Yehudah as sole occupiers of the southern section of the Land. The account is recorded in 2Kings,

In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria, and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. (2Ki.17:6).

Therefore, YHWH was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight: there was none left but the tribe of Yehudah only. (2Ki.17:18).

This left the northern territory along with its cities vacant and the king of Assyria imported foreigners to replace the tribes of Israel in Samaria (the whole area north of Yerushalayim),

And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon, and from Cuthah, and from Ava, and from Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel: and they possessed Samaria, and dwelt in the cities thereof. (2Ki.17:24).

Thus, the north (Samaria) was occupied by idol worshipping heathens, this was why the woman at the well spoke to Mashiach in the terms she did (John.4:9). The expulsion of the northern tribes from the Land was the result of YHWH's rejection of them. However, it did not take long for YHWH's rejection to encompass the whole house of Ya'akov culminating with the two remaining tribes; Yehudah and Binyamin being exiled to Babylon. But let's remember how YHWH thought of Israel at the beginning,

For you are a holy people to YHWH your Elohim. YHWH your Elohim has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a treasured possession above all the peoples on the face of the earth. (Deut.7:6).

Then look how it ended up for all twelve tribes,

"And after she had done all these, I said 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Yehudah saw it. "And I saw that for all the causes for which backsliding Israel had committed adultery, I had put her away and given her a certificate of divorce; yet her treacherous sister Yehudah did not fear, but went and committed whoring too. (Jer.3:7-8).

And He said to me, "The crookedness of the house of Israel and Yehudah is exceedingly great, and the land is filled with bloodshed, and the city filled with that which is warped. For they say, 'YHWH has forsaken the land, and YHWH is not seeing!' But as for Me, My eye shall not pardon, nor would spare, I shall recompense their deeds on their own head." (Eze.9:9-10).

Total rejection ended with the conquest of the southern kingdom by Nebuchadnezzar and Yahudah's exile to Babylon. It was immediately before Nebuchadnezzar ransacked the temple, that YHWH's glory left the Land. Chapter 10 of Ezekiel describes the exit of YHWH's glory from the temple; in essence what we have is,

- YHWH gives the order to the man in linen (refer to the end of the previous chapter) to gather coals of fire from between the cherubim and scatter them over the city, symbolising Elohim's judgment upon it and the whole house of Ya'akov (verses 1-3).
- YHWH's *Shekinah* (divine presence of God) then begins to move from over the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place towards the temple threshold. The entire house and courtyard were filled with the surrounding cloud and brightness (verse 4).
- The following verses 5-17 describe YHWH's throne, then in verse 18 we are told YHWH's *Shekinah* left the temple threshold, ascended His mobile throne above the living cherubim and rose from the earth: verse 19. There is no record of YHWH's *Shekinah* returning to the Land – not until Mashiach that is.
- YHWH's *Shekinah* left the temple through the east gate (v.19) and proceeded to the Mount of Olives (Ezek.11:23) after which it ascended to heaven. Mashiach also ascended from the Mount of Olives (Acts.1:9-12) and will descend the same way (Zech.14:4).

*A detailed study of Ezekiel shows that the sequence of the information given to Ezekiel does not align with the order of the chapters contained in the Scriptures. Ezekiel is very exact in dating when he received information which is contained within thirteen scrolls. Unfortunately, the information has been divided into 48 chapters and presented in an entirely different sequence to how it was given, which adversely affects our understanding of the prophet. For example the desecration of the temple and the vision of YHWH's glory departing was the first revelation given to Ezekiel and contained in the first scroll yet we do not read of these things until chapters 8 through 10 inferring the revelation was much later. What Ezekiel was seeing as recorded in the above verses was in fact confirmation of the past.

But what happened to the Ark of the Covenant after YHWH's departure? There is no record of Nebuchadnezzar taking it back to Babylon. Indeed Ezra 6:5 would infer that the Ark was not amongst the temple items taken to Babylon. 2Baruk says the following,

And another messenger began to descend from heaven and said unto them, "Hold your lamps and do not light them till I tell you. For I am first sent to speak a word to the earth and to place in it what YHWH Tzva'ot has commanded me. And I saw him descend into the Holy of Holies and take from thence the veil and the Holy Ark and the mercy seat and the two tablets and the holy raiment of the priests and the altar of incense and the forty eight precious stones wherewith the priests was adorned and all of the holy vessels of the temple, And he spoke to the earth with a loud voice, "Earth, earth, earth hear the Word of Elohim and receive what I commit to you and guard them to until the last time. So that, when you are ordered you may restore them, so that strangers may not get possession of them. (2Bar.6:5-8)

Whether or not you accept the apocrypha, there is no record of any of the items described above being taken to Babylon and it is accepted that the second temple did not contain all of the ritual objects of the first temple. Hence, we should not be too quick to discard such information as contained above. It is not inconceivable that YHWH would protect from heathen hands that which He considered most holy? To summarize this section, YHWH's glory left the Land with His rejection of the house of Ya'akov and the exile of the remaining two tribes from the Land. The Ark of the Covenant where His glory resided was removed from humanity and his glory never returned.

YHWH decreed 70 years Babylonian exile for Yehudah, after which they returned to the Land and under Zerubbabel the second temple was completed in 515 BC. However, as previously said, the second temple lacked some of the equipment included of the first temple, most specifically the Ark of the Covenant and its contents: the stone tablets, the pot of manna and Aaron's rod. According to the Babylonian Talmud (Yoma 21b), the second temple lacked the *Shekinah* (YHWH's Glory) and the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) both present in the first temple. Hence the Most Holy Place of the second temple was empty and spiritually void. Clearly YHWH no longer desired to dwell amongst these people; hence the second temple only facilitated temple ritual.

In 167 BC Antiochus Epiphanes IV desecrated the temple which led to the Maccabean revolt, resulting in the defeat of the Seleucid army and consequently the collapse of Seleucid rule in Palestine. The temple was rededicated to YHWH in 165 BC. This victory led to the Hasmonean (Maccabean) Dynasty which appropriated the powers of both state and religion (ruler and high priest). It was these illegitimate priests (not being descendants of Phinehas) taking control of the temple that led to the cessation of the Zadokites, the legitimate priests and subsequent authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For them, Hellenised Jewish leaders who disregarded YHWH's law were equally unacceptable as were the Seleucid rulers. The Zadokites considered the Hasmonean claim to the high priesthood a usurpation of Zadok right. Eventually the position of high priest became a lottery. To the Qumran community the Hasmoneans were every bit as worldly and corrupt as were the Seleucids.

Sometime between 76-67 BC Queen Salome Alexandra, wife of the late Hasmonean king Alexander Jannaeus, seeking to secure her position, aligned herself with the Pharisees and Sanhedrin, establishing a rabbinical council with religious legislative powers and judicial authority: the forerunner of Judaism today. Consequently, the administration of the temple remained in illegitimate hands until its destruction in 70 AD. Indeed, the faith itself had been usurped by the Pharisees who perverted the truth of the Scriptures, hence Mashiach's persistent castigation of the Pharisees. I believe these were the violent men referred to in Matt.11:12 from whom today's Rabbis are descended. (The reference to violent men may also encompass the Church which was responsible for several bloody crusades). Thus, the second temple never experienced the esteem as did the first temple: this being the case why did YHWH command a second temple? He tells us in Haggai, it was so that His Word and His Ruach HaKodesh could have a continued influence over the people (Hag.2:5). But a little later on He says, "it is His 'house' that exists after His wrath that will be esteemed" (Hag.2:9), this is the spiritual 'house' referred to by Mashiach when He responded to the abuse of the temple in John.2:19,

And the Yehudim answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You are doing these?" Yahusha answered and said to them, "Destroy this Temple, and in three days I shall raise it." (John.2:17-19).

His comment caused ridicule because His audience failed to realise the real essence of His words: that He was referring to a new spirituality that would be birthed through His death and resurrection. The apostle amplifies this essence in his epistle to the Corinthians,

Do you not know that you are a Dwelling Place of Elohim and that the Spirit of Elohim dwells in you? (1Cor.3:16).

Or do you not know that your body is the Temple of the Set-apart Spirit who is in you, which you have from Elohim, and you are not your own? (1Cor.6:19).

Because of their rejection of Him, Judaists are unable to enjoy this new spiritual concept, built wholly upon Mashiach. Because of their rejection, **Israel's relationship with YHWH remains estranged, it is no longer a covenant relationship as at the beginning.** It will take the spilt blood of Mashiach to re-establish a covenant relationship with the house of Ya'akov but the prophet leaves us in no doubt that the relationship will be restored, and Israel will be a part of Mashiach's earthly kingdom.² The following extracts refer,

And I shall pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) a spirit of favour and prayers. And they shall look on Me whom they pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son. And they shall be in bitterness over Him as a bitterness over the first-born. (Zach.12:10).

In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Yerushalayim, for sin and for uncleanness. (Zach.13:1).

*And I shall bring the third (**remnant of the Jewish people**) into fire, and refine them as silver is refined, and try them as gold is tried. They shall call on My Name, and I shall answer them. I shall say, "This is My people," while they say, "YHWH is my Elohim." (Zach.13:9).*

Unfortunately, today very few Jewish people realise that their salvation no longer relies on their lineage but on their immersion into the body of Mashiach. Consequently, in the eyes of the Jewish people the temple remains to be the principle symbol of Israel's relationship with YHWH. The last verse above states very clearly only a third of the Jewish people will be saved, these are those who come away from Rabbinic Judaism.

The Times of the Gentiles

The relationship between YHWH and the house of Ya'akov remains alienated today and will continue to be so until it is brought back into covenant by Mashiach upon His return. Currently we are awaiting the return of Mashiach and the inauguration of His millennial rule, hence we are enjoying the 2000 year period spanning between Mashiach's first and second coming. Mashiach made two important comments about this period. First was His warning to the Pharisees, that because of their unrighteousness and refusal to repent, the kingdom of heaven would be taken from them (from Israel, from the house of Ya'akov) and offered to the gentiles,

*Because of this I say to you: the kingdom of Elohim shall be taken from you and given to a nation (**ethnos**) bringing forth the fruits of it. (Matt.21:43).*

* The Greek ethnos can be translated people.

² The relevance of Mashiach's death to a new covenant relationship between YHWH and Israel is discussed in detail in the article 'Why the Word had to Become Flesh' at www.undertorah.com in the End Times articles.

Subsequently in Luke, Mashiach specifies when the kingdom will be taken from Israel and what will be the sign of this eventuality,

And when you see Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) surrounded by armies, then know that its laying waste is near. Then let those in Yehudah flee to the mountains and let those who are in the midst of her go out and let not those who are in the fields enter her. Because these are days of vengeance, to fill all that have been written. And woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing children in those days! For there shall be great distress in the earth and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Yerushalayim shall be trampled underfoot by the gentiles until the times of the gentiles are filled. (Luke.21:20-24).

Thus, the destruction of Yerushalayim and more specifically the temple itself signalled the start of the times of the gentiles. What is more, we can discern that the phrase ‘times of the gentiles’ is a pseudonym for the Gospel (salvation) being offered to the gentile nations.

But as we said above the house of Ya’akov will be brought back into covenant. Besides Zachariah quoted above, there are many Scriptures prophesying Israel’s return, Jer.31:31-33 and Ezek.37:15-19 are examples. Nonetheless, the most emphatic confirmation of Israel’s end of time presence is in Rev.21:12, which confirms the integrity between the new Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) and the twelve tribes. But it is the prophet Hosea, who stipulates when their return will be,

After two days He will revive us, on the third day He will raise us up and we will live in His presence (His earthly kingdom). (Hos.6:2).

Hosea is talking about the rejuvenation of physical Israel which he describes in terms of days. But the apostle tells us that a day is like a thousand years to YHWH (2Pet.3:8), thus what Hosea is saying, is that physical Israel will remain separated from YHWH for two days i.e. two thousand years (the times of the gentiles). When Mashiach returns He will, possibly after the completion of YHWH’s wrath, bring physical Israel back into the fold (Zach.12:10) and inaugurate His millennial rule (Hosea’s third Day). Their return will complete Mashiach’s ‘body of believers’ which will consequently reign with Him as His nation of priests. The apostle also talks of Israel’s estrangement as being temporary,

*For I do not wish you to be ignorant of this secret, brothers, lest you should be wise in your own estimation, that blindness in part has come over Israel, **until** the fullness of the gentiles has come in. (Rom.11:25).*

Again, we see a reference to the ‘times of the gentiles’ but expressed slightly differently. Today we are enjoying the ‘times of the gentiles.’ It is the period for the building of the ‘body of Mashiach’ and we need to bring together two verses mentioned earlier,

Because of this I say to you: the kingdom of Elohim shall be taken from you and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits of it. (Matt.21:43).

“Go make disciples of all nations in My name.” (Matt.28:19)

In the first comment Mashiach talks of a nation (singular) but subsequently He uses the plural: nations. How can nation = nations? What He is alluding to, is that a nation a.k.a. His earthly kingdom will come out of the nations of the world. His earthly millennial kingdom will be a newly created nation (singular) formed wholly of His complete ‘body of believers.’ It will be the ‘nation of priests’ spoken of by Peter (1Pet.2:9).

Having said the ‘times of the gentiles’ is the period we are living in today i.e. the 2000 years spanning between Mashiach’s first and second coming, we can correctly discern that the ‘times of the gentiles’ will be brought to an end by YHWH’s wrath as is intimated by the following comment,

And a reed like a measuring rod was given to me, and the messenger stood, saying, “Rise and measure the Temple of Elohim, and the altar, and those worshipping in it. But cast out the court which is outside the Dwelling Place, and do not measure it, for it has been given to the gentiles, and

they shall trample the set-apart city under foot for forty-two months.” (Rev.11:1-2).

Here we are told that the ‘times of the gentiles’ will last only forty two months, so is Revelation contradicting what we have just said: that the times of the gentiles is the period between Mashiach’s first and second coming? I do not believe so! Revelation 11 is concerned with the final years of this age. Verses 1-14 are specific to the period of the second woe of YHWH’s wrath. I believe the above passage is a reference to the temple that will be in existence when Mashiach returns: the temple currently being contemplated by the Jews.³

The Constitution of Mashiach’s Earthly Kingdom as it Exists Today

We said in the introduction it is necessary to differentiate between Mashiach’s millennial rule and His earthly kingdom because the former is a future event whereas the latter, according to Mashiach’s words, is in evidence today. So where and what is its constitution? Let’s examine what is said about the earthly kingdom,

1. *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath **translated us into** the kingdom of his dear Son.* (Col.1:13).

In this verse translated (Strong 3179) is used in the form of a transitive verb and we can legitimately replace this word with changed. **Thus, the apostle is saying that YHWH has brought us out of darkness and changed us into the kingdom of His Son.** According to the apostle we personally constitute the kingdom. This comment aligns exactly with Mashiach’s statement in Luke 17:21 referred to under item 5 below. When we understand that the ‘body of Mashiach’ is itself the earthly kingdom, it becomes clearer that when describing the kingdom, Mashiach consistently refers to personal character because it is character which delineates His earthly kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is indeed a reality but it is a spiritual reality only identifiable via human character and not by geographical boundaries. The parable of the Ten Virgins supports this understanding.

2. *And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, **the kingdom of God comes not with observation:***

This comment from Mashiach is further confirmation of the above statement. Mashiach’s kingdom is not established through physical conquest but through spiritual conquest. This makes sense when we consider that our whole relationship: the totality of our relationship with YHWH is spiritual not physical. Not until Mashiach physically establishes His kingdom in the Land in the millennium will His kingdom be visible.

3. *“Return, O backsliding children,” declares YHWH, “for I shall rule over you, and shall take you, one from a city and two from a family, and shall bring you to Zion.” (Jer.3:14).*

Mashiach’s earthly Kingdom is present today but in the form of small groups of scattered individuals dispersed around the globe. Upon his return Mashiach will collect together His kingdom in the manner described by Jeremiah and take it to a safe place outside the realms of YHWH’s wrath. After the wrath Mashiach will supernaturally place His followers in the Land, thereby establishing His millennial kingdom being His ‘body of believers’ and the saved remnant of Israel. But this is not the rapture preached by the church because although those gathered will receive a rejuvenated body, it is a physical not a spiritual body: it is not the body referred to in 1Cor.15:51-54.

4. *But Mashiach said, “Allow the young children and do not stop them from coming to Me, for of such is the kingdom of the heavens.” (Matt.19:14).*

Howard’s ‘Hebrew Gospel of Matthew’ finishes the verse, ‘*For of them is the kingdom of heaven*’ This verse alone shows that character is the very matrix of Mashiach’s earthly kingdom and a specific character at that. It is a character not incomparable to that of a small child, i.e. innocent, clean, a character not polluted with the ways of this earth.

³ This will be the temple occupied by the false messiah described in 2Thess.2:4. It is not YHWH’s temple, refer to ‘Does YHWH Require a future Temple Building Parts 1-4 under end time articles at www.undertorah.com

5. *"Neither shall they say, 'Look here! or, look there!' for, behold, the kingdom of YHWH is within (G1787) you."* (Luke.17:21).

This statement is complementary to what is said in items 1 & 2 above, indeed, the three statements together enforce the spirituality of Mashiach's kingdom, it is an undeniably spiritual picture. As mentioned under 1 the apostle must have had this verse in mind when making his comment in Col.1:13.

Note: Contrary to some translations Mashiach does not say "in your midst" but "within you." Midst (G3319 *mesos*) and within (G1787 *entos*) are two different Greek words. The word midst can be found 45 times in the New Testament and each time it is *mesos*. Within can be found 31 times in the New Testament and is one of three Greek words: *entos*, *esōthen* and *en* never *mesos*. Werner's 'Ancient Roots Translinear Bible' finishes as 'It is inside of you' which harmonizes well with the apostle's statements to the Corinthian congregation (1Cor.3:16 & 6:19) quoted above. See later comment under 'Mashiach Is Not A Kingdom.'

But who can claim Mashiach's earthly kingdom? Mashiach states quite plainly that there will be many who believe they qualify for inclusion in His 'body of believers' but they are under an illusion,

Not everyone who says to Me, 'Master, Master,' shall enter into the reign of the heavens, but he who is doing the desire of My Father in the heavens. Many shall say to Me in that day, 'Master, Master, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and done many mighty works in Your Name?' And then I shall declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who work lawlessness!'(Matt.7:21-23).

Most English translations have inequity not lawlessness which is a deliberate mistranslation by the Church. Inequity is defined as a lack of fairness or injustice: neither meaning portrays the real essence of Mashiach's accusation in this passage. It is plainly evident from His statement that Mashiach has a relationship only with those who 'Do the will of the Father' and what is the Father's will – not to add or subtract from his Word/Law (Deut.4:2, 12:32). Mashiach further confirms this fact in Matt.4:4 where He says, "Man must live by every word that comes from the mouth of the Father." Obedience to His laws (being lawful) is what pleases the Father and it is the lawful that have a relationship with Mashiach. Hence the correct translation for verse 23 has to be 'lawlessness.' The NIV for example has 'evildoers' without defining evil: whereas 'lawlessness' is defined in 1John.3:4.

Matt.7:21-23 accurately describes the Church today. The passage is not referring to Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims or the like: none of whom act in the name of Mashiach. Only Christians believe they have a relationship with Mashiach whilst not observing the law of the Father. Consequently, they qualify as lawless. Faith today is in a state of confusion due to much false teaching and many who think they are on the right path are going to be disappointed. What is evident is only Mashiach knows those who will constitute His kingdom.

The Fulfilment of Mashiach's Earthly Kingdom

Today Mashiach is building His kingdom by gathering His body of believers together. But His 'body/kingdom' cannot be complete without the remnant of Israel destined for salvation Isa.10:20-22, Jer.46:28, Zech.13:7-9. This remnant are those of the nation of Israel that accept Mashiach and described in Zech.12:10-14. It is clear from Zechariah that this change will not take place until Mashiach's return and He confronts Israel. As described in a separate article⁴ after the completion of YHWH's wrath Mashiach will supernaturally transport His whole body of believers a.k.a. His kingdom, to the Land when the king shall rule over His kingdom for a thousand years. Only then will Mashiach's kingdom be a single visible entity (Luke.17:20).

Mashiach Is Not A Kingdom

Finally, we need to put to bed the teaching that Mashiach is Himself the kingdom. This misconception stems from a poor translation of Luke 17:21. Those advocating this concept are reading translations presenting this verse

⁴ Refer to the article 'Tribulation, Wrath and After' in End Time Articles at www.undertotah.com

with Mashiach saying the kingdom is 'in your midst' rather than 'within you.' As explained above there is no real support for such a presentation of Mashiach's comment. If indeed, Mashiach is both king and kingdom how are we to understand the apostle's statement that the kingdom is a kingdom of priests (plural). Mashiach is not the kingdom it is the 'kingdom of Mashiach,' 2Pet.1:11, Eph.5:5, Col.1:13. Indeed Heb.1:8 categorically states that Mashiach is the ruler of the kingdom such a comment is incongruent with Mashiach being the kingdom.

The reality becomes clearer when we consider what entry into Mashiach's kingdom entails – a changed heart, a new man, as supported by the following verses,

And now, if you diligently obey My voice, and shall guard My covenant, then you shall be My treasured possession above all the peoples – for all the earth is Mine – and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a set-apart nation.' (Exod.19:5-6).

See, the days are coming," declares YHWH, "when I shall make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Yehudah, not like the covenant I made with their fathers in the day when I strengthened their hand to bring them out of the land of Mitsrayim, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them," declares YHWH. For this is the covenant I shall make with the house of Israel after those days, declares YHWH: I shall put My Torah in their inward parts, and write it on their hearts. And I shall be their Elohim, and they shall be My people. (Jer.31:31-33).

For I delight in the Torah of Elohim after the inward man. (Rom.7:22).

When we understand the earthly kingdom is synonymous with a righteous lifestyle, Mashiach must have said 'the kingdom of heaven is within you' and not 'in the midst of' or 'among you.'

The Father's Heavenly Kingdom.

Chapter 15 of 1Corthinians describes the events that bring Mashiach's earthly kingdom to an end, that is, events which end His millennial rule when Mashiach will hand all back to the Father,

Then the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to Elohim the Father, when He has brought to naught all rule and all authority and power. For He has to reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy to be brought to naught is death. For "He has put all under His feet." But when He says "all are put under Him," it is clear that He who put all under Him is excepted. And when all are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself shall also be subject to Him who put all under Him, in order that Elohim be all in all. (1Cor.15:24-28).

Chapter 15 verses 50-53 describe the final change from the physical to the spiritual for all believers in Mashiach. This is the event the church refers to as the rapture but contrary to church teaching it happens at the end of Mashiach's millennial rule. We said earlier that Mashiach's kingdom is physical whereas the Father's kingdom is spiritual, hence Mashiach's words to the Pharisees when describing those who enter the Father's kingdom,

And Mashiach answering, said to them, "You go astray, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of Elohim. For in the resurrection they do not marry, nor are they given in marriage, but are as messengers of Elohim in heaven. (Matt.22:29-30).

Also, we have the words of the apostle, "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of Elohim." As we said earlier there will be births and deaths in Mashiach's earthly kingdom.

Besides the scant information given in Revelation we are told almost nothing about life in YHWH's heavenly kingdom. When we consider the paradisiacal life offered to those living in the Land throughout the millennium, life in the actual presence of YHWH in His heavenly/spiritual kingdom can only be greater than paradisiacal. It is probably beyond anything the human mind is able to envisage.

Conclusion

The physicality and ritual embodied in the Tanakh (Old Testament) temple system of worship was brought to an end by Mashiach just as prophesied by Daniel,

And he (Mashiach) shall confirm a covenant with many for one week. And in the middle of the week he (Mashiach) shall put an end to slaughtering and meal offering (the temple system). And on the wing of abominations he shall lay waste, even until the complete end and that which is decreed is poured out on the one who lays waste (Dan.9:27).⁵

Mashiach substituted the structural temple, its priesthood and ritual with a 'Body of believers.' In the temple system YHWH connected with His people via His Shekinah Glory resident in the Most Holy Place within the temple building. Today Mashiach – the Head is integrally connected to His 'Body of Believers' via the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit). The Ruach has taken the place of YHWH's Shekinah, a fundamental difference being that the Ruach is imbued within each individual believer, whereas YHWH's Shekinah was always separated from the people. It is as the apostle declared, "we have a better covenant." There will never be separation again, YHWH does not go backwards, hence there being no need for a future temple system as declared in the above passage from Daniel. Whilst footnote 3 above directs the reader to a separate article discussing the issue of a future temple, I would like to close this study with a comment made by Yahusha HaMashiach to the Samaritan woman at the well as recorded in John 4:9. The Gospel of Kaledy is more forthcoming about this discourse than is the Canon of Scripture,

The Samaritan woman said to Yahusha, "Sire I can see you are One of those special people who know all things; now tell me is it true what Your people tell us, that we should worship in the temple at Yerushalayim (Jerusalem) to reach the ear of Elohim, for He is only there and not on Mount Gerasim." Yahusha told her "Be assured the time is coming when the place of worship is unimportant, for though your people worship without understanding the nature of worship, while the Jews worship with this knowledge, neither know the true nature of worship. The time is coming when all who understand the nature of worship will do so in spirit and in the light of truth. For Elohim is the Greatest of spirits and His worshippers must therefore bring something of the spirit. This and labour in His service, is the only acceptable kind of worship, the smoke of flesh and fowl are not acceptable offerings. (G of K: Ch.10)

Mashiach brought a true spiritual faith, not based on YHWH sitting in a temple but as a direct participant in individual lives. This is YWH's true goal – a relationship based on emotions, something temple ritual could never achieve.

Clifford Fearnley 2020 (revised)

⁵ Refer to the article 'Daniels Seventy Weeks' at www.undertorah.com in End Time articles.