

# **BIBLICAL PROPHECY ALL FULFILLED? WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE US THEN?**

**Or, put another way,**

## **WHAT REMAINS FOR US TO LIVE FOR IF THERE IS NOT ANOTHER COMING OF CHRIST?**



### **INTRODUCTORY REMARKS**

My generation, born in the mid 1940's, who have had our roots in the Reformed family, did not grow up without the Second Coming of Christ idea. However, it was never an overwhelming sermon topic. Things have changed a lot though in the course of our children's' era and even more intensively in the lifetime of their children. The visual media has brought the Second Coming into our homes in various ways and variations. People, who had, for example, never heard the concept of Rapture, suddenly became flooded by it in television programs and books. When Martie and I left the Reformed environment in 1996 on a journey of many years through the Pentecostal and Charismatic environments in search of biblical truths, we too became absorbed intensively in these teachings.

In time, however, questions began to surface and this gained momentum from 2007 especially. Intensive Bible study in the following years left us with the conclusion that if we studied the Bible in its correct historical, cultural, literary and geographic context, with accentuation of the address to whom each prophecy was directed, it shows that every Bible prophecy has been fulfilled. We therefore understand the Bible to be a fulfilled revelation of the living God and His Anointed One (Christ, Messiah), yet still remained the lamp for our feet and light unto our path of life (Ps 119:105). The moment one takes the Bible out of its ancient Hebraic environment you risk replacing or polluting the true meanings of the specific concepts or events with contemporary Western ideas. [You can read more in this regard in our concise website article \*Foundational Understanding Of The Biblical Record\*. The link to it, as well as to other relevant articles is given at the end of this discussion.](#)

Based on the aforementioned, we understandably often receive the type of questions that make up the heading. One can write a book of many pages on this topic and even sub aspects of it, but this is not the purpose. I simply look at primary moments in order to provide answers to questions one often receives in passing. It is also deemed necessary to briefly explain our understanding of some other relevant concepts in order to ensure that the reader understands our analytic basis correctly.

In keeping with our approach in so many of our other articles and our books, I wish to accentuate here too, that the article is rooted in our search for the truth and not to enforce our understanding. It is all about what truth is and whether truth matters? It remains the individual's personal responsibility to decide in this regard.

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**What is truth?**

**Does truth matter?**

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## RELEVANT CONCEPTS

### The Kingdom of God

After His return from the desert where He was tested by the devil “(...) *Jesus began to preach, ‘Repent, because the kingdom of heaven has come near!’*” (Matt 4:17). Later He said to the Pharisees, “If I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come to you” (Matt 12:28). There are three things to accentuate:

- Firstly, the expressions ‘kingdom of heaven’ and ‘kingdom of God’ are the same. The first is the one commonly used in Hebraic environments because the use of the name God was generally avoided. It is still the case today.
- Secondly, the word ‘near’ has the perception in our language that it is still on its way, that it still needs to arrive. In the ancient Hebrew, however, it carried the meaning of already being there. It did not lie in the future.
- Thirdly, the understanding of the kingdom in that culture did not describe a static image such as land area or a collection of people, but action. It referred to the presence of God reigning in the lives of people and its demonstration by signs and miracles. The kingdom of God was therefore present everywhere His power was demonstrated through and in His children.

In summary we can say that the kingdom of God was brought to humanity by His Christ and was concluded in a New Covenant. This kingdom manifests in them who truly believe in Christ and in whose life the Fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal 5:22) and the gifts of the Holy Spirit are revealed (1 Co 12). We can also add the content of the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7 to this. How sad it is that the reality of the gifts of the Holy Spirit are regarded as irrelevant in our time by some Christian groups, or that its integrity is polluted through artificial showmanship and excesses by others. People often say they are led by the Holy Spirit, but at the same time reject the reality of the Spirit’s gifts which actually have to empower us to minister His kingdom presence to one another.

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**The Kingdom of God is here!**

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### Heaven and Earth

The concept of the passing of the old heavens and earth and the appearance of a new heaven and earth in its place is a central aspect of the popular end-times teachings. It is presented as real physical events and people accordingly make the statement that we are still here; therefore the old heavens and earth have not yet been destroyed. Consequently such a new (utopian) heaven and earth have not yet arrived.

Our problem in understanding is rooted therein that the culture within which these concepts had been received and written, understood them in a spiritual sense while we want to do so in a literal or physical sense. In their understanding God laid or grounded the foundation of the earth and planted the heaven when He concluded the Mosaic Covenant with them at Sinai. This spiritual application is found throughout the Scriptures. See, for example, Deuteronomy 32:1, as well as Isaiah 1:1-4; 24 (the whole); and 51:16 (which entailed a specific prophecy about the salvation for Israel).

You can read more on the New Heaven and New Earth in our website article – the link is provided at the end.

### **New Jerusalem**

Here we have another spiritual image from the Scriptures. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews stated unequivocally that “(...) *you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God (the heavenly Jerusalem) (...)*” (Heb 12:18, 22).

God’s sanctuary was polluted through Adam’s sin. The Mosaic Covenant was the guide, the vehicle, to the restored sanctuary which would come through the crucifixion of Christ, His resurrection and eventual judgment of physical Jerusalem. After explaining that the sacrifices of the Old (Mosaic) Covenant had to be made repeatedly because they were imperfect, the writer to the Hebrews then stated the following in chapter 9:11-12:

Now the Messiah has appeared, high priest of the good things that have come. In the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands (that is, not of this creation), He entered the holy of holies once for all, not by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption.

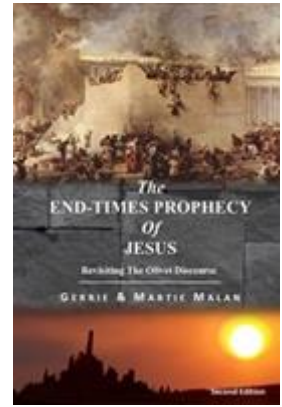
The whole context describes a completed reality. One became part of the Old Covenant by birth from a marriage between two Hebrews. Certain rituals were required, of which circumcision was one. Children born from a marriage between a Hebrew and a gentile, as well as children born from adultery and incest, were excluded for ten generations (Deut 23:2). Later people from other nations were also admitted under condition of being taught Torah, circumcision and other rituals. When the Mosaic Covenant was replaced by the New Covenant, the physical Abrahamic bloodline was no longer a condition. There now was a spiritual bloodline manifest in Christ – people who worship the Father in spirit and in truth (John 3:5 & 4:20-26). All people are born into this position, but just like the Jews of old that turned their back on the God of the Covenant to serve idols, each person now also chooses whether he/she wants to or will be part of this family. The last portion of this article will say more about this family.

You can read more about the New Jerusalem in our specific article on this topic.

### **Parousia (Presence)**

The next important concept to understand is the term ‘coming’ within the specific word context of the questions the disciples of Jesus asked Him (Matt 24:3). It is the Greek word *parousia*, which is an expression of presence. There is absolutely no indication here, or any other place in the New Testament, of a physical return or coming of the Lord Jesus. Those who teach such a bodily presence to people have to philosophise it into the Scripture. In addition, only Matthew uses this specific expression and here we need to bear in mind that he was writing to a Jewish readership and therefore applied particular Jewish concepts. The parallel portions in Mark and Luke very clearly refer to the destruction of the temple.

The events pertaining to the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was the sign to that generation that the Son of man was indeed who He said He was – the Son of God, the Messiah seated at the right hand of the Father (and therefore in heaven). Matthew 26:64 & 65 (as well as Mark 13:62 & Luke 22:69) sheds light on any doubt one may have in this regard: “(...) *Jesus saith unto him[the high priest] (...) nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven*” (KJV). The word translated here as ‘coming,’ is *erchomai*, which also reflects the idea of a presence in this context. No thought of ‘one day in the distant future’ is to be found in the text.



## The hell

We grew up with this terrifying concept of the hell, a place of eternal torment. You either believe in Jesus the Christ, or you go to the flaming hell for eternity. Preaching, whether formal in the church or informal in conversations between people often took on the form of “turn or burn.” It was sobering for me to discover that the hell was not a biblical concept.

You will not find the word or expression in the Hebrew Tanakh (Old Testament). The 1917 English translation of the Tanakh uses the word “nether-world”, while translations such as The Scriptures, The New English Translation, and the Hebrew Roots Bible use the Hebrew *Sheol*. The Old Afrikaans Translation uses the word ‘doderyk’ (realm of the dead) for the Hebrew *Sheol* that is found 65 times in the Old Testament - the place where the souls of the deceased went to await the expected resurrection. The modern concept of hell was imported into its teachings by the Catholic Church from the North European Germanic mythology in the middle Ages. It is used 31 times for *Sheol* in the King James Bible. According to this mythology it was the place where demons and the spirits of the deceased were.

In the New Testament one does find the expression ‘hell’ as translation for three different Greek words, viz. *Hades*, *Gehenna* and *Tartarus*. The latter is only found in 2 Peter 2:4 and it describes a place where the angels that sinned against God were bound in darkness awaiting the judgment to come.

The word *Hades* is found eleven times and also carries the meaning of the realm of the dead, but without any reference to the presence of Satan, demons or eternal torment of the human soul. The judgement described in Revelation 20, was the Old Covenant Judgment which took place with the presence (return; *parousia*) of Jesus in judgment and destruction of the Temple forty years after His crucifixion. Thereafter a temporary domain of the deceased is not mentioned again. *Hades* was destroyed (Rev 20:14). Also read Daniel 12, which has the same meaning of the end of that dispensation. Note the statement in Daniel 12:1, 2, for example: “(...) *But at that time all your people who are found written in the book will escape. Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake, some to eternal life, and some to shame and eternal contempt*. It is here that Jesus ‘made a proclamation to the spirits in prison’ after His death on the cross (1 Pe 3:18-20).

*Gehenna*, a Greek word derived from the Hebrew *Ge-Hinnom*, appears twelve times. Some sources describe it as a valley outside of Jerusalem that was used as the local dumping ground where even the

carcasses of dead animals and bodies of executed criminals and strangers were dumped. Here the fire was seemingly never extinguished – the typical image ascribed to the hell. However, this does not seem to be supported by archaeological evidence. Other sources describe it as the place where Hebrew idolaters sacrificed their children as burnt offerings to the idol Molech. Whichever description is the truth, the sources generally agree that it was a place and concept that eventually became a symbol of utter cursing for the Jews. It became associated as a place of bodily and spiritual punishment for all wicked and evil people.

**Nowhere in the New Testament does one find the apostles preaching the concept of *Gehenna* to the gentiles (heathens).** James used the word in his letter, but it is important to accentuate that it was a letter to the twelve Hebrew tribes in the dispersion (Jas 3:6). Even then he used it as a symbol of the tongue as a source of unrighteousness (Jas. 3:6). Jesus used the concept, but then it was to Jewish audiences and descriptive of God’s coming judgment upon Jerusalem. This judgement of *Gehenna* was eventually fulfilled in the year 70 AD with the complete destruction of Jerusalem and the temple.

### **DOES THE BIBLE THEN HAVE ANY MORE RELEVANCE?**

Contemporary preaching often creates the impression that the Bible is all about its prophetic content. This gives rise to the subtitle/question above. Such a perception is clearly and unequivocally denied in principle by the Scriptures. See 2 Timothy 3:14-17, for example<sup>22</sup>:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing those from whom you learned, and that from childhood you have known the sacred Scriptures, which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Note the word ‘righteousness’ in the quoted text – and do make the effort in your Bible study to consider the presence of this word in the Scriptures. Paul wrote in Romans 4:3, “*For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God and it was credited to him for righteousness.*” An honest question for us all: how much of that does one see in our life environment? We are not even thinking of modern governments in posing that question!

For the Hebrew (or Israeli) of old, the Torah (Pentateuch) was the Book of the Covenant. In this same sense, and with the unknown writer of an article on the relevance of the Bible on the worldwide web, I can unequivocally say that the whole Bible is even more relevant precisely because of the fulfilment of the prophecies. I have already explained the concept of the Kingdom of God and accentuated some Scripture portions such as Matthew 5-7. It is up to us, the believers in Christ, to live these kingdom principles, values and standards. Unfortunately we have been left impotent in this regard by all the twisted end-times teachings. We should not only be making the world a better place to live in physically for the sake of our children and grandchildren, but also spiritually and culturally.

After all, the Scripture states that the government of Christ will increase forever – Isaiah 9:7 (9:6 in the Old Afrikaans translation) – whereas the popular end-times teachings preach an end to that growth. In

Daniel 7:13-14 we read, “*I continued watching in the night visions, and I saw One like the son of man coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was escorted before Him. He was give authority to rule, and glory, and a kingdom; so that those of every people, nation, and language should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and His kingdom is one that will not be destroyed.*” End-times preaching, however, have it that this is not true, that his dominion will in fact be interrupted.

When one approaches a medical doctor because you are ill, you accept the diagnosis and take the prescribed medication to heal. After you have healed you don’t sit around longing for the illness to return so that you can take the medication again. No, you carry on with your life in that good health! Why is it so difficult for the institutional church to live in biblical health? Is it perhaps because the church throughout the world is walking very carefully on the eggs of tax exemption and do not wish to stir up the anger of governments against them by being true prophets of God who call the governments to order?

### **DO WE HAVE SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO?**

We can also put the question differently, for example, what then remains for us to live for?

That brings us to the climax of this article. Yes, indeed, what do we have to look forward to? The simple answer lies open in front of us as John describes the purpose for which the Messiah came in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, why God the Father sent His Anointed One, the Son of His love to humanity (John 3:16):

For God loved the world [*humanity*] in this way: He gave His One and Only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

**Eternal Life!** That is the prize for him and her who complete the race in faith in Christ the Lord! The Greek word *apollumi* that is translated ‘perish’ here implies total destruction, a complete end of existence. This is the second or everlasting death waiting on them who reject God’s Messiah. There is no mention of an eternal torment in a so-called hell fire – it is simply not found in the Bible. For the person who rejects Christ, his death here on earth is *apollumi* by own choice, a complete cessation of existence (bodily and spiritually) that can only be granted by the Creator of Life. Even then, so I believe, everyone who made that choice grieves God, for the Scripture in John 3:17 declares that God did not send His Son to the world [*humanity*] to judge/condemn them, but to give them redemption from the curse of sin.

According to the natural sciences energy cannot be destroyed. When it disappears from a system, it has simply moved on to another one (Wikipedia, 2011). In like manner, and according to the Bible, when the life essence of the human, the soul, leaves its earthly system or body, it is translated to another dimension, which I believe is His full, personal, boundary free and everlasting realm, (e.g. 2 Co. 5:8): “(...) *yet we are confident and satisfied to be out of the body and at home with the Lord.*”. Amen!

(In Revelation 20:14-15 a second death is mentioned, which is the spiritual death. This is rooted in the Old Testament or Mosaic dispensational concept of *Sheol* or *Hades* that was terminated

or destroyed in Christ in the New Testament dispensation or era. In this old dispensation the souls of the dead would have waited in *Sheol/Hades* for the resurrection and judgment – that has been completed in Christ. You can read more in this regard in our article on The Great White Throne Judgment. The earthly death of one who believes in Christ immediately passes on to another, eternal spiritual dimension).

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### **RELEVANT ARTICLES ON OUR WEBSITE**

These articles can all be downloaded from our website: [www.hoseaconnection.org](http://www.hoseaconnection.org).

Malan, G.J. & M.J. 2013. *Foundational Understanding of the Biblical Record*.

Malan, G.J. & M.J. 2013. *New Heavens And New Earth*.

Malan, G.J. & M.J. 2013. *The New Jerusalem*.

Malan, G.J. & M.J. 2013. *The Great White Throne Judgment (Revelation 20:11-15)*.

### **OTHER SOURCES REFERENCES**

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<http://pulpitandpen.org/2014/06/05/the-burning-garbage-dump-of-gehenna-myths-thatll-preach/>

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### **OUR BOOKS**

You can also download our four books (free) from our website. Two of these focus on biblical end-times prophecy, viz. *Daniel Without Make-Up And Long Toes* and *The End-times Prophecy Of Jesus*. We believe, however, that our concise book *Rightly Divide The Word* is the most important one as it explains the principles we apply in our Bible study.

### **BIBLE VERSION**

Unless an indication was given of text taken from the King James Version of the Bible, Scripture quotes come from the Holman Christian Standard Bible, copyright 2003, Holman Bible Publishers.