

ISAIAH 9:7

SEATED ON THE THRONE OF DAVID

“Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.”¹

Isaiah foresaw a day when the Messiah would be seated on the throne of David. That glorious throne would represent an eternal Kingdom that would never fall. Study of the “Throne of David” does not lead us to a series of disconnected events, but rather the history of the Faith is a continuum, interweaving past and future while of necessity impacting the present. We must understand what Isaiah meant when he spoke of the “Throne of David” in order to understand how what is yet future benefits us now.

Messiah’s Kingdom will be established on earth; Isaiah was quite definite in stating that when it has come it will increase. The reign of Messiah will at some point in history extend over all the earth. That day is not now. The focal point of Messiah’s reign will be the Throne of David. That focus is the subject of our considerations during the message for this Sunday immediately preceding the celebration of Messiah’s birth.

THE THRONE OF DAVID IN HISTORY — David was the greatest of all Israel’s Kings. Without question, the Jewish people to this day look back with longing to his reign. Though liberal theologians denigrate the biblical account of a Hebrew King named David who reigned from Jerusalem, the Bible assumes the historicity of David’s wise rule. Though revisionist historians have attempted to reconstruct the biblical account of David’s reign, the Word of God stands firm in its insistence upon the Davidic kingdom. Moreover, the history of salvation seamlessly weaves the life of David, and especially the importance of his lineage, throughout the divine account.

Isaiah clearly associates the “throne of David” and the Kingdom of Messiah. Therefore, we are justified in asking what is meant by his reference to “the throne of David?” Otto Schmitz states of the throne that “In the Old Testament the throne is the privilege of the king [GENESIS 41:40]... The throne of Solomon is [referred to as] the throne of his father David [1 KINGS 1:13, 35, 46; 2:12, 24, 33, 45; though cf. also 1 KINGS 1:37]. But the reference here is not so much to the actual throne constructed by Solomon with unparalleled magnificence [1 KINGS 10:18–20; 2 CHRONICLES 9:17–19; cf. also 1 KINGS 7:7] as to the throne as a symbol of government [2 SAMUEL 3:10; cf. also ISAIAH 14:13] which transcends the present occupant of the throne. Thus, there are many references to the throne of David in the sense of the eternal duration of his dynasty promised in 2 SAMUEL 7:12 ff. [1 CHRONICLES 17:11 ff.; cf. 1 MACCABEES 2:57; cf. also 2 SAMUEL 7:16; JEREMIAH 13:13; 17:25; 22:30; 36:30; PSALM 89:4, 29, 36; 132:11–12]... It is in similar terms that the throne of David is called the throne of the Messiah in ISAIAH 9:6. This throne is distinguished not merely by power but also by justice [ISAIAH 16:5; PSALM 122:5].”^{2, 3}

¹ Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from **The Holy Bible: English Standard Version**. Wheaton: Good News Publishers, 2001. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

² On the general link between the throne and righteousness, cf. **PROVERBS 20:28; 25:5; 29:14 (20:8)**.

Looking back to the reign of David, the second King of the United Kingdom of Israel, will prove to be of limited value for the purpose of the message this day. However, the continuation of David's rule through his descendants is in view whenever the Bible refers to "the throne of David." As an example of this particular usage, consider the message that the angel Gabriel brought to a young Jewish virgin.

Mary, the mother of Jesus our Lord, appears to have lived in anticipation of the establishment of David's throne in Jerusalem. When Gabriel, the angel whom God sent to announce the birth of the Christ to Mary, you will recall that he included this particular promise. "[The child whom Mary was to bear] will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end" [LUKE 1:32, 33]. The son that would be born was destined to reign on David's throne—He is appointed to reign.

John the Baptist, the forerunner of Messiah's First Advent, preached a message that generated great anticipation in Judea. Levi relates John's message in these words, "In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" [MATTHEW 3:1, 2]. Thus, John had preached that the Kingdom was drawing near; nevertheless, he never witnessed initiation of that Kingdom. Rather than witnessing the establishment of the Kingdom, John was imprisoned and his life was threatened!

Here is the pertinent account. "When John heard in prison about the deeds of the Christ, he sent word by his disciples and said to him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another'" [MATTHEW 11:2, 3]? William Barclay relates that, "In Carlisle Castle there is a little cell. Once long ago they put a border chieftain in that cell and left him for years. In that cell there is one little window, which is placed too high for a man to look out of when he is standing on the floor. On the ledge of the window there are two depressions worn away in the stone. They are the marks of the hands of that border chieftain, the places where, day after day, he lifted himself up by his hands to look out on the green dales across which he would never ride again."⁴

That is John! He faces his own mortality and he thus questions whether the Kingdom he had declared would shortly be ushered in. The Romans were still in control. The One he thought would sit on David's throne appeared content to preach an ethical message without immediate fulfillment. What was happening?

The disciples, also, when they were sent forth were charged with the responsibility of declaring, "The kingdom of heaven is at hand" [MATTHEW 10:7]. The One of whom they spoke and in whom they had trusted was betrayed into the hands of the Jewish religious leaders and crucified by the Romans. However, He had risen from the dead. Now, forty days after His conquest of death, the disciples were assembled together with Him on a hill outside of Jerusalem. They had one question in their minds, "Lord, will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel" [ACTS 1:6]. Clearly, the understanding of these stalwarts of our Faith was that the kingdom of heaven was the kingdom of David—a political entity established on earth.

³ Otto Schmitz, **θρόνος** (art.) in Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey William Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, Vol. 3**, (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI 1964) 162-3

⁴ William Barclay (ed.) **The Gospel of Matthew: Volume 2, The Daily Study Bible**, Rev. ed. (The Westminster Press, Philadelphia PA 1975) 2

Therefore, we are obliged to understand what Isaiah means, or what any prophet or what any preacher of the Word, means when speaking of Messiah seated on the throne of David. The throne of David is not the throne of God. Some contemporary theologians claim that Jesus is now seated on the throne of David at the right hand of God; but they could not be more wrong. Our Saviour is indeed seated at the right hand of God [COLOSSIANS 3:1]. However, the throne of God is distinct from the throne of David.

To explain this distinction, remember that God established several important covenants, the most important of which was arguably His covenant with David. It will prove beneficial for us to establish what these covenants are, thus gaining at the least a basic understanding of God's promises registered in the pages of the Old Covenant.

God established a Covenant with Noah when He promised that He would never again destroy the earth by flood. *The Noahic Covenant* is found in GENESIS 9:8-17. "God said to Noah and to his sons with him, 'Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you, and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth. I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth.' And God said, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations: I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds, I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh. When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth.' God said to Noah, 'This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth.'"

A second great covenant is *the Abrahamic Covenant*. As the name implies, God established this covenant with the patriarch Abraham. This covenant is recorded in GENESIS 17:7, 9, 13. "I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you... As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations... Both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant."

Another of the divine covenants is commonly referred to as *the New Covenant*. "Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbour and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more" [JEREMIAH 31:31-34].

The last Covenant to consider during this message is *the Davidic Covenant*, which is recorded in the first instance in **2 SAMUEL 7:9-16**. “I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may dwell in their own place and be disturbed no more. And violent men shall afflict them no more... The LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. When he commits iniquity, I will discipline him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men, but my steadfast love will not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.”

In **1 CHRONICLES 17:10-14** the Davidic Covenant is restated. “I declare to you that the LORD will build you a house. When your days are fulfilled to walk with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son. I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom forever, and his throne shall be established forever.”

The aforementioned covenants all share two primary features. Each covenant is a demonstration of God’s character, especially as an expression of His grace; and none of the covenants depend on man or man’s effort in order to be fulfilled. God is the author of each of these covenants; mankind is the beneficiary in each instance.

The recipients of each of these covenants are progressively defined as each is declared in their appropriate order. The *Noahic Covenant* is made with all mankind. The *Abrahamic Covenant*, however, is restricted to descendants of Abraham, or in other words, the immediate beneficiaries are the Jewish people. The *New Covenant* is even more narrowly and specially restricted to Israel in the days when Messiah reigns during His Millennial Kingdom. The *Davidic Covenant* is specifically promised to David and is related especially to a particular descendant of David.

Unfortunately, theologians often confuse students when they forget or neglect to remember the intended recipients of each of the aforementioned covenants. Ignoring the recipients leads to an illicit attempt to make each covenant apply to Christians. The headings found in many Bibles perpetuate and compound this error! However, we must always remember that Israel is not the church and that the church is not Israel; the *Davidic Covenant* in particular is given to Israel and not to Christians. This is not to say that the covenants of God have no impact on us as Christians; but it is to acknowledge that the covenants of God have validity only as we understand to whom God speaks.

The *Davidic Covenant* was made with David; and it sets forth specific promises for a descendant of David. The text for today speaks of a descendant of David sitting on the throne of David, ruling over his kingdom, establishing and upholding that kingdom with justice and righteousness. A political kingdom and not a spiritual kingdom is in view. Therefore, the promise is not so much a promise about the First Advent of our Lord as it is a promise of His Second Advent when He will establish His throne in Jerusalem and reign over all the earth during the Millennium.

It will prove very helpful for us to consider more carefully this *Davidic Covenant*; it will help understand what God is promising in the text for this day. Several specific promises were made to David in this divine covenant [2 SAMUEL 7:9-16]. First, God promised that He would make David's name great. Then, God promised that David and God's people would enjoy a rest from their enemies. God further promised that He would build a "house"—that is, God would build a dynasty for David [7:9b-11].

Finally, Nathan's oracle—for it was Nathan who delivered this Word from God to David—outlined several divine promises for David's posterity. The first of these promises for the yet future ruler who will occupy David's Throne is that God will establish the kingdom. The ruler will be one of David's direct descendants. This future ruler will, during the days of his reign, build a house (establish a dynasty) for God's name. Moreover, the throne of the coming ruler's kingdom will endure forever. This ruler is promised to occupy the position of a son in relationship to God. Moreover, the covenant faithfulness of God would not depart from him. The house, kingdom and throne of David would endure forever [7:12-17].

I have invested more time than usual in addressing this issue, simply because it is important that we recognise that the text for our study today is less a "Christmas" text than it is a "Millennial" text. The First Advent of our Lord Jesus sets the stage for His Second Coming, at which time He will assume the throne of His Father David. The Scriptures in no way makes allowance for Christ to sit on the Throne of David now. Scripture clearly presents two everlasting thrones—the throne of God Almighty in glory and a future promised Davidic Throne upon which Jesus, as the Son of Man, will be seated. Nowhere is there such a teaching as Christ on the throne of David reigning over a spiritual kingdom.⁵

I suspect that friends of Jesus have done more harm to the promise that the Kingdom of David is distinct from the Kingdom of God than have unbelievers. Contemporary theologians present an ecclesiology that insists that David's Kingdom and the Kingdom of God—David's throne and the Throne of the Lord God—are identical. Nothing could be further from the truth.

THE THRONE OF DAVID IN ESCHATOLOGY — The prophecy now under study is intimately associated with the Covenant that God made with David. God promised that a descendant of David would reign over his kingdom. One scholar has properly stated that the Davidic Covenant "promised ... an eternal dynasty, an eternal kingdom, an eternal throne, and an eternal person. The eternal nature of the dynasty, kingdom, and throne are guaranteed only because the Seed of David culminated in the Person who is Himself eternal. Christ holds three offices: prophet, priest, and king. However, He does not function in all these offices simultaneously, but sequentially. During His First Advent, Christ functioned as a prophet. Since His death and resurrection, and until He returns, Christ functions as a priest. Jesus has never yet functioned as a king. For Him to reign as king requires the re-establishment of the Davidic throne. Starting at the Second Coming, Christ will sit upon this throne to rule as king over Israel and king of the world."⁶

⁵ See Mal Couch, **Progressive Dispensationalism: Is Christ Now on the Throne of David?—Part I**, Conservative Theological Journal, Vol. 2, pg. 45, 1998

⁶ Arnold Fruchtenbaum, **Israelology, Part 5 of 6, Chafer Theological Seminary Journal Volume 6**, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 36-50, April, 2000

Tragically, a number of respected theologians have identified the Kingdom as “spiritual,” which is to assert that Messiah’s Kingdom is not a literal earthly kingdom. These scholars argue that the rule of Christ is in the hearts of His people. According to this view, there is a close relationship between the kingdom of God and the church, the Body of Christ or the people of God.⁷

I am compelled to take great care to explain this covenant and to delineate the relationship of our text to the covenant, simply because so very many religious leaders appear to be confused. A large number of contemporary Christians espouse a form of “folk theology.” They imagine that the Kingdom of God is the same as the Messianic Kingdom. The practical result of such confusion is the assertion that the Scriptures have a “spiritual” fulfillment in our day. According to this strange, though popular, view there is *no* future fulfillment for Isaiah’s prophecy. Christ has already come, and that is the end of the matter. Yes, He is coming again, they say, but His coming at that time is merely to wrap things up!

The two greatest passages bearing on the virgin birth of Christ assign but one purpose for that birth—that Christ might sit on David’s throne. Listen to them in their turn. The first of these passages is our text under scrutiny during the service for this Lord’s Day. “To us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, *on the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness* from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this” [ISAIAH 9:6, 7]

The second passage records the annunciation of the birth of the Christ to Mary. “The angel said to her, ‘Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in thy womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and *he will reign over the house of Jacob forever*, and of his kingdom there will be no end’” [LUKE 1:30–33].

⁷ e.g., J. C. Ryle, **Expository Thoughts on the Gospels: Matthew** (reprint ed, Marshall, Morgan and Scott, London, UK 1989), 130–141. John Broadus, in his classic commentary refers the parables to the “Messianic reign,” by which he means, however, the progress of Christianity. (John A. Broadus, **Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew** (American Baptist Publication Society, Philadelphia PA 1886), 282–309). For G. Campbell Morgan, the parables picture the kingdom “as realised in the world,” which means that “The subject of the Church is involved as the means to an end and as the measure of the realisation of the kingdom.” (G. Campbell Morgan, **The Gospel According to Matthew** (Fleming H. Revell Co., Old Tappan, NJ 1929), 145). Like many dispensationalists, Morgan saw the kingdom as beginning with the rejection of Jesus recorded in MATTHEW 12 and concluding with the second advent of Christ. William Hendriksen defines the kingdom with a menu of means that he nonetheless declares inseparable: God’s rule in the hearts of His people, their complete salvation, the church and a redeemed universe! (William Hendriksen, **Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew, in New Testament Commentary** (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids MI 1973), 249). Even the popular dispensational writer, Warren Wiersbe, refers the parables to the present age as descriptive of “Christendom.” (Warren Wiersbe, **Bible Exposition Commentary** (Victor Books, Wheaton IL 1989), 44–45). Carson correctly states, “Nowhere in Matthew does ‘kingdom’ ... become ‘church’ ...” (D. A. Carson, **Matthew**, in Frank E. Gaebelein (ed.) **The Expositor’s Bible Commentary** (Zondervan, Grand Rapids, MI 1984) 316) (see also 325–326). “The parable [referring to the Parable of the Weeds, MATTHEW 13:24–30],” he writes, “deals with eschatological expectation, not ecclesiological deterioration.” Ibid. 317.

This same earthly purpose—His eternal reign over David’s Kingdom—is in view in the resurrection of Christ. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, referring to the message that was delivered by David in **PSALM 16:8–11**, declares that Christ was raised up to sit on David’s throne. These are Peter’s words, recorded by Doctor Luke. “Being therefore a prophet, and *knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants on his throne*, he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption” [**ACTS 2:30, 31**]. Obviously, Peter understood David to mean that the One whom he foresaw would reign on this earth from Jerusalem.

Similarly, the identical great earthly purpose is in view in the Second Advent of Christ. This is abundantly obvious by the words spoken by the Master Himself. Jesus is recorded as saying, “When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, *then he will sit on his glorious throne*” [**MATTHEW 25:31**; cf. **19:28**; **ACTS 15:16**].

In **2 SAMUEL 7:16**, the Lord God promised David, “Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever.” It is appropriate that we should ask what David’s understanding of this covenant could have been. Actually, David’s understanding of God’s meaning is revealed in the verses that follow [**vv. 18–29**]. Moreover, David’s interpretation of the divine promise is provided in **PSALM 89:20–37**. When he had received the divine covenant, David accepted God’s promise, recognizing its endless duration. The Scriptures bearing on the divine covenant concerning David’s throne provide scant grounds for the prevalent theological notion that the Lord God is intending in this covenant a spiritual kingdom with the Davidic throne located in heaven.

God directly decreed that the Davidic throne would pass to Solomon and his successors. Therefore, a serious problem arises for the one spiritualising this covenant; they must assign the time when, and the circumstances under which, the throne passes into heaven and also establish when the authority of that throne changes from that which is earthly to that which is heavenly.

Jeremiah announces the same continuity in succession as that revealed to David [**JEREMIAH 33:14–26**]. This promise of a descendant of David, qualified because of his birth into the Davidic line, to sit on his throne was fulfilled to the time of Christ both by the succession of kings so long as the Davidic throne continued, and then by those named in **MATTHEW 1:12–16** who were, in their respective generations, entitled to sit on David’s throne. With the birth of Christ into this kingly line—both through His mother and through His stepfather—He who ever lives and ever will live, completes the eternal promise to David that Jeremiah declares.

Had the anticipated Davidic kingdom been some supposed spiritual reign from heaven, there would be no occasion for the throne rights to pass to any earthly son of David, nor would there be any occasion for an incarnation into the Davidic line. Authority over the earth had been freely exercised from heaven in previous ages and could have continued so. Apart from the earthly, Davidic throne and kingdom, there is no meaning to the title ascribed to Christ, “The son of David.” Great significance is to be seen in Christ’s answer to Pilate’s question, “So you are a king?” “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I came into the world—to bear witness to the truth” [**JOHN 18:37**].

It is appropriate to conclude, then, that the Second Person of the Triune Godhead became incarnate so that the promise the LORD God had made to David might be fulfilled. To that end, the throne and kingdom of the Incarnate God is said to abide forever, being occupied by the eternal Messiah of Israel. Such is the direct and uncomplicated witness of the Word of God. Thus, the Incarnation of the Son of God is necessary in order that the King may sit on David's throne forever.⁸

There is complete harmony between the Old Testament prophets and the Lord Jesus Christ concerning the identity and nature of the kingdom. Paul always sees the kingdom of God as future, and not present, and as such, it was the focus of his preaching, even up to the end of his ministry. He saw the goal of the *Parousia* of Christ as the establishment of His kingdom, and throughout his ministry, Paul firmly held to the hope of its imminent advent. Thus, I conclude that Paul never saw himself as reigning in the present age. He did, however, see believers as those whose future inheritance is so certain as virtually to place them in God's kingdom now [PHILIPPIANS 3:20, 21].

The kingdom message that Paul preached was particularly targeted toward the Jews, or at audiences with significant Jewish auditors. After the destruction of Jerusalem, coupled with the growth of the church among the Gentiles, hope for the immediate restoration of the kingdom dimmed. The proper New Testament relationship of Christians to the kingdom is summarized in REVELATION 5:10, where the twenty-four elders (representing Old Testament saints and the redeemed of the New Testament) worship the Lamb in heaven: "You have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth" [cf. REVELATION 1:6]. Christians have been appointed rulers and priests in the kingdom, but the arrival of the kingdom itself is still future.

THE THRONE OF DAVID AND ITS PRESENT IMPLICATIONS — This plethora of information—some of which may seem esoteric and unimportant to our present Christian life and service—undoubtedly provides us with exceptional information. But what does this information have to do with our lives as worshippers of the Christ at this time? How will possessing this information benefit us as Christians? Moreover, how will this same eschatological knowledge benefit those outside the Faith? Isaiah's prophecy is for a future time; but the impact of his prophecy should be immediate.

This is what I mean. We Christians have received Jesus as the promised Messiah. We know that He came the first time in order to present Himself as an offering for sin. In short, we are convinced that Jesus was born so that He might present His life as a sacrifice because of our sinful condition. We are equally convinced that He is coming again, this time to bring salvation for those who look for His appearing. Living in anticipation of the fulfillment of this prophecy becomes a primary means by which God changes us into the image of His beloved Son.

Watching for His return, we Christians are blessed because we are led to be careful in the manner of our life [REVELATION 16:15; 1 JOHN 3:2, 3]. Knowing what is yet to come, we prepare our minds for action and become sober-minded [1 PETER 1:13]. Mediating on the return of our Lord to reign, we become reasonable in our associations and in our lifestyles [PHILIPPIANS 4:5], we learn patience [JAMES 5:7] and we endeavour to be fully sanctified, body, soul and spirit [1 THESSALONIANS 5:23].

⁸ See Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Trinitarianism: Part 5, Bibliotheca Sacra, Volume 98*, pp 22-24, , 1941

Considering the return of Christ to reign, we are enabled to endure temptations and severe trial [1 PETER 1:7] and we are prepared to bear persecution for the sake of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us [1 PETER 4:13]. Contemplating His reign, we become careful in pronouncing judgement against others [1 CORINTHIANS 4:5]. The coming reign of our Lord is the consolation of those who grieve over the dead who sleep in Jesus [1 THESSALONIANS 4:14-18]. His coming Kingdom is proclaimed each time we observe the Lord's Table [1 CORINTHIANS 11:26] and that kingdom is the hoped for promise for each child of God [1 CORINTHIANS 1:4]. The knowledge benefits us as Christians, therefore.

What benefit is there for those outside the Christian Faith in knowing of Christ's coming reign? The Word declares, "[Christ] has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him" [HEBREWS 9:26b-28].

At His return, Christ the Lord will come to judge the living nations that have rejected Him. What an awesome time is declared to follow His return. Jesus spoke to His disciples of that day. "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left.

"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.' Then they also will answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?' Then he will answer them, saying, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.' And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" [MATTHEW 25:31-33, 41-46].

Therefore, sinners are given warning through knowledge of His coming reign. Some will hear the message and take warning. Christ Jesus the righteous Judge is coming to rule over the earth. Each time an outsider hears a Christian pray, "Your Kingdom come," that outsider must know that judgement is coming.

Let the lost take warning and be saved, even in this hour. The message of life is this, "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" [1 TIMOTHY 1:15]. The Word of God declares that "While we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. For one will scarcely die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person one would dare even to die—but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us" [ROMANS 5:6-8].

All that remains for you, sinner friend, is to receive the gift of life that is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Believe that He died because of your sin and that He was raised to declare you just, and surrender your stubborn will to His glorious will. He will save you, set you free from all condemnation and never bring you into judgement. Jesus has declared, "Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life" [JOHN 5:24].

Hear this final plea drawn from the Word, and I am finished. “If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved... For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved’” [**ROMANS 10:9, 10, 13**]. May God grant you life as you take refuge in His beloved Son. Amen.