



# Prophecy and the Kingdom of Jesus

'Why oppose the coming Kingdom?'

**Jon Garvey** poses a disarming question with nuclear implications for people and leaders

you can advocate black magic on public television but be arrested for breaching the peace if you preach Christianity in the street

**I**t's safe to say that if you have the slightest sympathy with the things said in *PT* month by month, it's because you agree that something is very wrong with our present world. You may, like us, be persuaded that our society is rebelling against Gospel truth it has known for centuries. Or perhaps you're uncertain, but wonder if the words of Scripture might conceivably explain the chaos around us.

But if you didn't think there is a problem, you'd be reading something else, or watching TV. Something strange is indeed happening when, as Clifford Hill found recently, experts refuse even to note the overwhelming evidence for the damage inflicted by our epidemic of broken families. Black has become white when, as a recent radio programme showed, couples now cohabit because of the 'stigma' of being married! Things are upside down when you can advocate black magic on public television but be arrested for breaching the peace if you preach Christianity in the street.

Part of *PT*'s task is to warn people—whether ordinary men or women, or those who lead the churches and the nation—that God will judge such spiritual blindness. It is the prophet's task to call the nations to repent and return to God's ways, and so perhaps to avert disaster.

## The spirit of prophecy

**B**ut behind such urgent messages is an even more fundamental message, always assumed but sometimes, if we are

not careful, forgotten. This message is what the angel said to John in *Revelation 19.10*: 'The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.'

What does that mean? What is this 'testimony of Jesus'? Essentially it is this: 'Jesus is Lord'. This is the 'good confession' Paul speaks of in *1 Timothy 6.13*, which Jesus himself made before Pilate, and for which he died. This is the testimony with which the saints overcome the devil in *Revelation 12.11*. It is a testimony that says Jesus Christ is the only ruler of this world. In other words, the spirit of prophecy presupposes the arrival of the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom is what Jesus came to bring, and it is the Kingdom to which we testify.

This Kingdom is not a constitutional monarchy, but absolute rule. It is a dominion in which nothing happens unless God either causes it to happen, or allows it to happen for his own purpose. Any other sort of king is not really a king at all, in Bible terms. So we might ask, how will God's rule come if the world is in such a mess? And I would reply that this is slightly the wrong question.

## The Kingdom before Jesus

**I**n one sense the Kingdom of God always existed, because God was always King. For example, *Psalms 47* affirms that the LORD is the great King over all the earth. The first reason it gives is that God subdued all the nations before Israel. And it's true—unless he had absolute power, he could not have enabled this tiny nation to overcome the great powers of the day. But it goes farther, and says that all the kings of the earth belong

to God, and assemble as his own people. The whole of the Old Testament reveals God controlling nature, politics and even human actions. He is truly Lord of all things.

All that is missing is the *acknowledgement* of his rule. Rulers attributed their power to their strength, instead of to their appointment by God. People attributed their blessings to their labour, and the works of nature to their idols. Only Israel exalted the LORD as the true God—and few even of them had real faith. He was King, but since the defection of Adam and Eve, King of a world in rebellion. In that sense the world hasn't changed much—but neither has God's invisible rule.

### The Kingdom that is coming

**F**aithful Jews looked for the time when God would not only reign, but would be acknowledged by all in heaven and earth. He would sweep away all rebellion, destroy his enemies, and bring back the peace of Eden to the world. That is what John the Baptist meant when he said that the kingdom of God was near. And that is what Jesus meant when he said the Kingdom had arrived. The hope Jesus pointed to, and the hope which Christians look forward to, is a complete re-creation of the Universe free of the taint of evil, and full of the praise and service of the LORD. Nothing less.

The easiest way for God to achieve that would have been to destroy us all and start again without us. But the way he chose to do it instead was a way of sacrificial love. He sent his own Son Jesus to die in our place, and to win for believers a place not only as subjects, but as heirs in his Kingdom. Because of what Jesus had done, the Father in his love gave all authority in heaven and on earth to him, so that at his name every knee might bow. So the King of this kingdom will be the Man who is also God. Yet in his submission to the Father he will present the Kingdom back to him. But not before he has brought into it a countless number of former sinners, who will now understand how the love and humility within the Trinity is the only true basis for power.

### The Kingdom that is here now

**S**o where are we today? In that glorious Sunopposed reign of Christ? Look around you! Obviously not. Are these then

like Old Testament times, when the world and the devil were in revolt against God? Even if that were the case, God would still be King of the earth, and we ought to fear his judgement on our evil times.

But actually things are not the same as they were. The Gospel doesn't say that Jesus *will* become king at some future date. It says that God gave him all authority in heaven and on earth when he raised him to his right hand in heaven. He is King already. Why? Because by his struggle on earth, he won the Kingdom for God, not as some of the Jews imagined through a military defeat of the Romans, but through the Cross, by which he defeated Satan, sin and death. Effective rebellion was crushed on Calvary.

What has happened since is just clearing up—rounding up prisoners, blowing up munitions dumps. Though actually it's more like a rescue operation. For the last 2,000 years Jesus has, by his absolute power and authority, been saving fighters from Satan's defeated army and rehabilitating them on God's side.

So if in Britain false religion seems to be in the ascendant, the nation will suffer as a result. But don't be under the illusion that Jesus' Kingdom is under threat. Just as he allowed the scattering of the Jerusalem church to enlarge his kingdom, so he has allowed this apostasy for his own purposes. Only Jesus' Name will be worshipped. Politicians flatter themselves that passing laws opposed to God's word will reap benefit for the nation. It will not—it will reap a whirlwind. But through it the Lord will also reap a harvest of souls.

The only question for both people and leaders is this: why oppose the coming Kingdom? You will only see your work come to nothing, and yourselves come to judgement.

***Kiss the Son, lest he be angry  
And you be destroyed in your way,  
For his wrath can flare up in a moment.  
Blessed are all who take refuge in him.***

(Psalm 2:12)

the hope which Christians look forward to, is a complete re-creation of the Universe free of the taint of evil, and full of the praise and service of the LORD