



## The Stealthy Restoration

### Review

Chapter 19 examined Christ's reference in the Olivet Discourse to the cosmic changes in the heavens that take place immediately after the Great Tribulation. These cosmic changes represent a regime change in the rulership of this world, from Satan to Christ, when the messianic kingdom is realized on the earth. After Christ establishes his messianic kingdom, he will come again to destroy this Genesis cosmos, rapture the saints, judge the world, and usher in the eternal age to come.

### The Obscure Kingdom of Christ

Admittedly, this reference to the cosmic changes in the heavens to describe Christ's earthly kingdom is rather obscure. In fact, discerning how and when Christ will establish his kingdom on this earth requires a synthesis of numerous obscure Old Testament prophecies and visions. Christ's Olivet Discourse must also be harmonized with Daniel's complex vision of the seventy weeks and the stealthy book of Revelation.

The word *stealthy* describes something intended to be secretive in order to escape detection or observation. For example, the stealth bomber is a military aircraft designed to deflect radar signals, enabling it to deliver its payload without being detected by the enemy.

Revelation is stealthy by design. God intended it to be difficult to understand for unbelievers. It is an apocalyptic form of literature that God used to reveal the truth about Christ's 1,000-year messianic kingdom to believers while obscuring it from the Roman authorities.

But why would God intentionally make the messianic kingdom difficult for the Roman authorities to comprehend by putting most of the information about it in books such as Daniel and Revelation? Because if the Roman authorities had easily understood these teachings about this earthly kingdom, they would have felt threatened by the contents and predictions of these books that foretold a Jewish-led messianic kingdom. In contrast, a gospel message that emphasized a heavenly kingdom that is not of this world did not pose a geopolitical threat to the Roman Empire.

### **The Nature of the Messianic Kingdom**

It is important to remember that the Old Testament vision of the messianic kingdom involves more than the political entity of the nation of Israel. Daniel and the prophets present a vision of a worldwide empire in which the Messiah uses Israel to rule over all other nations. As Daniel foresaw, the Messiah will rule every nation on this earth: "The greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven [all nations] shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High" (Dan. 7:27). The Jewish Messiah and his ruling elders will rule the whole world as a global empire, with Jerusalem as its capital.

Pagan Rome had expanded its empire to include Israel and many other nations. Whenever they conquered a nation, they would bring the captured king back to Rome through the gates of the city in a triumphal procession through the streets. They would parade both their captives and the loot they had seized. They even built triumphal arches at these gates to commemorate many of these victories. The Arch of Titus was constructed in AD 81 by Emperor Domitian to commemorate the sack of Jerusalem in AD 70. A portion of the relief on the inside of the arch depicts the spoils of Jerusalem and the temple. During the Roman Empire, all roads led to Rome, bringing the wealth of the conquered nations.

In the Jewish vision of the Messiah's empire, all roads will lead to Jerusalem, bringing the wealth of the nations: "Your gates shall be

open continually; day and night they shall not be shut, that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations, with their kings led in procession” (Isa. 60:11). In the messianic kingdom, Rome will be subservient to the Jewish empire centered in Jerusalem! In contrast to the stolen wealth brought to Rome, the riches that will be brought to Jerusalem will be graciously offered by nations out of appreciation for an era of peace and prosperity.

The Romans knew enough about the Jewish concept of a messianic kingdom to be hypersensitive to any talk about a Jewish Messiah who would overthrow their empire and set up a Jewish empire in its place. As such, the Romans would have been very hostile to any gospel message that foretold a Jewish Messiah ruling over their nation. That is why the New Testament authors remained focused on a gospel that emphasized the kingdom of heaven.

It also explains the stealthy book of Revelation, which reintroduces the messianic kingdom described by the Jewish prophets and informs us that it will last for a thousand years. But Revelation would be like one enormous parable to the Roman authorities. They could read the book all day long and still be unable to comprehend it. Revelation is difficult for believers to decipher; for unbelievers, understanding it would have been an almost impossible task.

Prophetic books, such as Revelation, provide an effective way for God to deliver his message about Christ’s earthly kingdom to his discerning followers, while disguising it from hostile unbelievers. But did God make it a little too stealthy? Theologians today continue to struggle to understand the book and remain divided on its interpretation.

The reason the Roman Empire conquered nations such as Israel was not to spread their pagan religion but to enrich themselves with the resources and tribute from the nations they conquered. Israel was a rather prosperous country and produced an abundance of olive oil and some of the finest wines in the Mediterranean region. Through Roman taxation, Israel also produced a good deal of revenue to fill their treasury. The Romans appointed governors over Israel and stationed military garrisons in the country to maintain this source of goods and revenue.

The Romans wisely allowed, however, some measure of religious liberty in Israel. They did not impose emperor worship or pagan worship on the Jewish people as they did in other pagan nations they

conquered. But the Romans were utterly ruthless in their repression of any threat to their empire. And they remained on the lookout for any would-be Messiah who would threaten their empire and its source of great wealth.

During the years of his public ministry, Christ intentionally avoided disputes over Roman taxation and domination. And he carefully navigated the subject of his future reign over this world. He would cleverly refer to his coming kingdom as a cosmic change in the sun, moon, and stars, when “the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” Consider his stealthy answer to Pilate when asked about his earthly kingdom:

So Pilate . . . called Jesus and said to him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” . . . Jesus answered, “*My kingdom is not of this world.* If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. . . .” Then Pilate said to him, “So you are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say that I am a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world.” . . . [Pilate then] went back outside to the Jews and told them, “I find no guilt in him.” (John 18:33–38)

Christ admitted that he was the Messiah, or the King of the Jews. But he said his kingdom is “not of this world,” and his servants would not fight for him to establish it. Therefore, Pilate had no reason to fear him. Pilate recognized that Christ was not guilty of leading an insurrection against the Roman Empire and attempting to set up a Jewish-led messianic kingdom in its place. As a result, Pilate found him innocent of these charges and tried to free him. This strange man only talked of a celestial kingdom—one that is not of this world.

But what did Christ mean when he said that his kingdom is “not of this world”? This seems to imply that there is no earthly kingdom. Amillennialists interpret this statement to mean there is no earthly kingdom, only the heavenly kingdom on the last day.

Christ, however, was being clever when he answered that his kingdom is “not of this world.” In Pilate’s sinful world, unrighteous and greedy rulers enlisted armies of men to fight, murder, and conquer other nations to gain power and glory. Their rulers lorded their power over their subjects, unjustly exploiting them to enrich themselves.

Pilate and his Roman overlords were tyrannical rulers, and many of their subjects were reduced to poverty or slavery so that the powerful could live lives of luxury. But the problems in this world are not simply the result of unjust earthly rulers. Behind these unjust rulers stands Satan, who rules over this dominion of darkness. The ungodly rulers are *his* people.

Christ teaches that the world needs a cosmic regime change *in heaven and on earth* before it becomes his righteous world. When this occurs, Christ's earthly kingdom will be a very different kind of kingdom from that of Pilate's world. Christ will truly lead an insurrection against Satan and the demonic host in this world. As the true King of this world, he will overthrow Satan and banish him from this earth for a thousand years. His angelic servants will then fight and destroy the Antichrist and the evil rulers of this world at the battle of Armageddon. He will then rule this world from his throne in heaven, using the saints whom he will resurrect to rule with him. All the rulers under his authority will be true servants to those they govern, according to the example their master set. His earthly kingdom will be one of peace, justice, righteousness, and abundant prosperity for all mankind. As Jesus said, his messianic kingdom *will not be* of this fallen, satanic world that is characterized by greed, unjust invasions, and exploitation. When his earthly kingdom comes to an end, he will return to take his people to his Father's eternal kingdom in heaven—which is also not of this world!

Christ was a skillful master of words. While affirming in his answer to Pilate that he was indeed the Messiah, he also refuted his accusers and spoke the truth about his future kingdoms—the one on this earth and the one in heaven—neither of which is of “this world.” Sadly, Pilate was so lost in demonic lies and deceptions that he doubted if truth even existed.

### Paul's Gospel

The apostle Paul was also very careful in his approach to Christ's earthly kingdom. It is important to remember that he was a Jewish missionary sent by God primarily to the Gentiles throughout the Roman Empire. He understood their world well, having been born, raised, and educated in the Roman city of Tarsus. Paul knew that

the Romans were familiar with the messianic prophecies and that he would be operating in a hostile environment. He knew that the Roman authorities would be deeply concerned about any Jewish evangelist traveling throughout their empire preaching that a Jew from Nazareth was the long-promised Messiah. Preaching such a message could be very dangerous.

Therefore, during the formative years of the church, Paul seems to have intentionally avoided the subject of Christ's earthly kingdom. Paul preached and wrote that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed the Jewish Messiah, but that he had come to liberate his people from Satan's dominion of darkness. Roman citizens who responded to his gospel were rescued from Satan's dominion and became citizens of heaven. They were to wait for Christ to return from heaven, resurrect them, and take them to the eternal kingdom of heaven. Paul's gospel message was truly heaven-centric:

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. (Phil. 3:20–21 NIV)

Paul's message centered on the saints being resurrected so they could inherit the kingdom of heaven—not his earthly kingdom or empire. The Romans, however, did not believe in a resurrection of the body. They viewed it as a resuscitation of a corpse, a notion which they found repugnant. Upon investigating Paul's teachings, the Roman authorities would have considered the idea of a citizenship in heaven obtained through a resurrection bizarre, even nonsensical. As such, they considered his gospel message essentially harmless and not a real geopolitical threat to their great empire.

Most important, the Roman authorities could not accuse Paul of promoting an insurrection because he never emphasized the fact that Jesus Christ would someday establish a worldwide kingdom on this earth. Besides, from their perspective, Paul's Jewish Messiah was dead because they had crucified him. How could a dead Jew from Nazareth overthrow the Roman Empire and become the ruler of the world?

The Romans were not overly concerned about Jews or Gentiles in their kingdom following a dead Jew who claimed to be the Messiah. They were, however, very concerned about other living Jews who kept popping up claiming to be the Messiah and leading revolts against Roman dominance. This is exactly what happened in the First Jewish-Roman War (AD 66–73) when certain Jewish leaders arose claiming to be the Messiah who would liberate Israel from Rome. The Romans sent three legions to surround Jerusalem and put down this rebellion. And they ruthlessly sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the temple. Another insurrection occurred during the Second Jewish-Roman War (AD 132–135). The Romans crushed the Jewish insurrectionists and killed the so-called messiahs. The Romans grew weary of these insurrections, and they dissolved the nation of Israel.

As a Jewish evangelist within the Roman Empire, Paul knew he was operating in hostile territory and had to be very careful in his description of Christ's kingdom. He would preach that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah according to the Jewish prophets, but he avoided a discussion of his earthly kingdom. Instead, he remained focused on his eternal kingdom in heaven with the Father.

Even though Paul avoided the subject of Christ's earthly kingdom, the Jews who were hostile to his gospel message knew that if they could distort his teachings to include a message of insurrection, the Roman authorities would have him arrested. This occurred in Thessalonica when Paul first began preaching that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah.

They came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. And Paul went in, . . . saying, "This Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ." And some of them were persuaded and . . . a great many of the devout Greeks . . . But the Jews were jealous, . . . [and they brought some of Paul's recent converts before the Roman authorities and said] "They are all acting against the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus." And the people and the city authorities were disturbed when they heard these things. (Acts 17:1–8)

The Roman authorities were understandably disturbed by this false portrayal of Paul's message. This episode in Thessalonica reveals what Paul was up against as he traveled throughout the Roman Em-

pire preaching that Jesus of Nazareth was the Jewish Messiah. What if Paul's sermons and writings had included a clear message about the future messianic kingdom on this earth when Christ would rule this world through Israel? Imagine how the Roman authorities would have reacted to Paul had he entered a Roman city and preached from the following messianic psalm:

May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! May desert tribes bow down before him, and his enemies lick the dust! May the kings of Tarshish and of the coastlines render him tribute; may the kings of Sheba and Seba bring gifts! May all kings fall down before him, all nations serve him! (Ps. 72:8–11)

The Roman authorities would not have embraced the idea that they would one day be ruled by a Jewish king who would require them to serve him, bow down to him, “lick the dust” under his feet, or “render him tribute” in order to enrich Jerusalem instead of Rome. The Old Testament contains numerous messianic prophecies of this nature.

Therefore, for strategic reasons, Paul wisely avoided preaching on Christ's earthly kingdom. Instead, his gospel message focused on repentance and regeneration, being rescued from Satan's dominion of darkness, living a life of faith, escaping God's wrath on Judgment Day, looking forward to Christ's return and the resurrection of an eternal body, and entering the eternal kingdom of heaven.

In his letters to the Thessalonians, Paul described many eschatological events such as the coming Tribulation, the second coming, Judgment Day, and the kingdom of heaven. He made no mention, however, of the earthly kingdom of Christ. Paul's objective was to bring as many Gentiles as possible into the kingdom of heaven. He may have figured that if he could get the pagan Gentiles to believe in Christ and make it to heaven, the messianic kingdom would come with the territory—whether they knew about it or not.

Because Paul's gospel focused on the heavenly kingdom, the early church was not persecuted for instigating a Jewish insurrection. The apostles admonished the young converts to become respectable citizens, pay their taxes, and to obey Roman law whenever possible.

It is important to remember that Rome was not a secular state with religious liberty; it was a state with an established pagan religion with laws intended to enforce the worship of their emperors and their pagan gods. As a result, Christianity was considered unpatriotic, even if it did not advocate a competing earthly kingdom. The Romans believed the Gentile Christians were being disloyal to their country.

The Roman authorities often unjustly persecuted the Gentile Christians for refusing to worship the emperor and abandoning pagan idol worship. This was unavoidable, but the early church surely did not need the added persecution that would have come had they advocated the overthrow of Rome for a coming messianic kingdom.

As an Old Testament scholar, Paul probably knew much more about the future reign of Christ than he revealed. Paul's one direct reference to the restoration of Israel is in Romans 11, which seems intentionally obscure. He taught that after the Jews finally repent and are grafted back in as believers in their own Messiah, then "the Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins" (Rom. 11:26–27).

Paul was quoting from a section of Isaiah (59:20–21) that is surrounded by a description of the messianic kingdom. But after the Deliverer forgives their sins, how will he deliver Israel and establish his kingdom? Paul does not answer this question. He leaves it to the reader to search Isaiah and figure out how Christ will deliver Israel and set up his messianic kingdom. Paul's unique mission to the Gentiles required him to avoid any clear presentation of Christ's earthly kingdom. Therefore, if one wants to learn about Christ's reign over this earth, Paul's letters are not the best resource.

Some theologians believe the book of Acts was written by Luke specifically to prove that Paul and the followers of Christ were not advocating the overthrow of the Roman Empire:

We think of Acts as the great missionary book of the Bible. . . . But in addition to being a narrative of great missionary advance, Acts was written as a legal defense. Luke was at pains to demonstrate to most excellent Theophilus (likely a Roman official or a member of the societal elite) that Christianity was not hellbent

on overthrowing Roman rule and was not in violation of the religious provisions of Roman law.<sup>12</sup>

### The Messianic Kingdom in the Gospels

Even the Gospels avoid the subject of Christ's earthly kingdom. They include only a limited number of Jesus' teachings that refer to his reign over this world. The best example can be found in Matthew 19. Christ has a conversation with a rich man and a follow-up conversation with his disciples, who were willing to sacrifice everything to follow him. Christ taught that one day he will indeed sit on his throne in heaven, restore this Genesis creation to its Edenic condition, and install his disciples on twelve thrones to assist him in ruling over the twelve tribes of Israel. Jesus promised the disciples that during his reign they will receive a hundredfold reward in this Genesis age *before* they inherit eternal life in the age to come.

But there are only a few references of this kind to his earthly kingdom in the Gospels. And they are not easily understood without a good understanding of the stealthy book of Revelation. The emphasis in the New Testament is clearly on the eternal kingdom of heaven, which posed no real threat to the Romans. The apostles who wrote the Gospels knew that the church had to first be established in the hostile Roman Empire that dominated their world at the time. Christ sent his apostles on a missionary journey with the following advice:

Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. . . . And you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. (Matt. 10:16–18)

As the disciples spread the message that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, they wisely avoided a clear presentation of Christ's earthly kingdom so that the Roman wolves would not devour them. And although they were innocent of advocating a Jewish insurrection against Rome, Jesus

---

<sup>12</sup> KevinDeYoung, "IsItWrongforChristiansToDefendTheirRights?," *The Gospel Coalition* (blog), October 24, 2014, <https://blogs.thegospelcoalition.org/kevindeyoung/2014/10/24/is-it-wrong-for-christians-to-defend-their-rights/>.

told them they should still anticipate being brought before the Roman authorities for questioning as to the nature of Christ's kingdom.

### Emperor Domitian's Interrogation

One can get a sense of the apprehension of the Roman authorities toward a Jewish messianic kingdom from an incident recorded by the church historian Eusebius, who lived from AD 263 to 339. The Christian grandchildren of Jude, the brother of Christ, were brought before Emperor Domitian, who reigned from AD 81 to 96. The emperor interrogated them about their beliefs regarding the earthly reign of Christ:

They were brought to the Emperor Domitian by the Evocatus [a re-enlisted veteran soldier]. For Domitian feared the coming of Christ as Herod also had feared it. And he asked them if they were descendants of David, and they confessed that they were. . . . And when they were asked concerning Christ and his kingdom, of what sort it was and where and when it was to appear, they answered that it was not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly and angelic one, which would appear at the end of the world, when he should come in glory to judge the quick and the dead, and to give unto every one according to his works. Upon hearing this, Domitian did not pass judgment against them, but, despising them as of no account, he let them go, and by a decree put a stop to the persecution of the Church.<sup>13</sup>

This interrogation is very revealing. Concerning the nature of Christ's kingdom, the emperor asked:

- Is it an earthly kingdom? "And when they were asked concerning Christ and his kingdom, of what sort it was"
- Would it start in Jerusalem? "And where it was to appear"
- Would it occur during his reign? "And when it was to appear"

---

<sup>13</sup> Eusebius, *Church History*, III.20.1–7. (Note: All quotes of early church fathers from A. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. C. Coxe, eds., 1997.)

These are important questions that pertain to the what, where, and when of Christ's kingdom.

Jude's grandchildren wisely answered, "It was not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly and angelic one." It would appear "at the end of the world" when Christ comes in glory on Judgment Day "to judge the quick and the dead." Their answers correspond to the gospel message of Paul and the apostles, which emphasized Christ's second coming on Judgment Day, when all mankind will be resurrected from the dead. The saints will inherit eternal life in a heavenly kingdom, while unbelievers will be sent to the lake of fire. The grandchildren's gospel message informed the emperor that he should stop worrying about threats to his temporal worldly empire and start worrying about Judgment Day and eternity!

Yet, Emperor Domitian considered their other-world beliefs "as of no account" and essentially harmless. As a result, he simply let them go because they did not present a geopolitical threat to his empire. He even issued an order to put a stop to the persecution of the church. Conversely, had Jude's grandchildren articulated a clear message about the earthly kingdom of Christ, the persecution of the church would have intensified. And the growth of the church would have been severely stunted at this critical stage.

This interrogation probably occurred before the book of Revelation was written in AD 90, so Jude's grandchildren likely had no knowledge of the millennial reign of Christ described by John. Without this information to draw from, they might not have had a full understanding of the future 1,000-year messianic kingdom. Or, if they did believe in an earthly kingdom, maybe they wisely chose not to say anything about it at that time.

This interrogation by the Roman emperor, however, clearly reveals why God may have kept the truth about the earthly kingdom of Christ cleverly hidden in stealthy books like Revelation during the embryonic stages of the early church. The gospel revealing Jesus as the Jewish Messiah had to be spread throughout the Roman Empire initially by Jewish missionaries, like Peter and Paul. The nation of Israel, which rejected Jesus as their Messiah, was still looking for a Messiah to liberate them from Roman domination. Therefore, the Romans were understandably hypersensitive to any talk of a messiah who might overthrow their empire and set up a Jewish-led empire in its place. As such, the Jewish

apostles wisely avoided the subject of Christ's earthly kingdom and focused their gospel message on the Father's kingdom of heaven.

### **Materialism**

Another reason Christ may have downplayed his earthly kingdom was because of mankind's tendency to be worldly and materialistic. The Old Testament prophets described the restoration as an earthly paradise with incredible abundance and material prosperity. Had Christ emphasized this prosperity, many people would have been drawn to him for the wrong reasons. The situation that Christ faced after he had made bread and fish for the five thousand serves as a good example of this tendency. John recorded the crowd's reaction to Christ's miracle:

When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!" Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountains by himself. (John 6:14–15)

The crowd wanted to force Christ to establish his earthly kingdom at that time, for they believed he would continue to miraculously provide them with an abundance of food—like manna from heaven—and they would never have to work the ground again. Sadly, they looked to Christ to provide only material things to sustain the physical body. They were searching for life in the pleasures of this world—not in Christ himself, who is the source of true spiritual life. Christ told them to get their priorities in order and to stop focusing on the material blessings of the kingdom. They should not labor in vain for the food that perishes but for the food that endures to eternal life. He taught them that the Spirit, not the flesh, offers true life. Christ wanted them to be drawn to a restored relationship with God—who is the source of spiritual life. And he wanted them to be drawn to God's eternal home in heaven, where they will experience this life with God for eternity. But as the reaction to the feeding of the five thousand reveals, humans tend to set their hearts on the worldly aspects of the messianic kingdom and ignore the most important thing missing in our lives—spiritual life

derived from a restored relationship with our Creator. Humans miss the garden of Eden but not its Creator.

Admittedly, Christ's earthly reign is a somewhat vague biblical teaching. Premillennialists sometimes act as if Christ's millennial reign is so obvious that it practically jumps off the pages of Scripture. But it really isn't that obvious. To understand God's endgame, we have to work our way through numerous obscure passages in the New Testament and synthesize them with the Old Testament vision of the messianic kingdom.

Amillennialists, on the other hand, interpret this lack of clear reference to Christ's earthly kingdom in the New Testament to mean that there is no millennial reign of Christ on this earth before the eternal kingdom. But that is a serious mistake. They are failing to take into consideration God's strategic reasons for keeping Christ's earthly kingdom hidden from the pagan Roman authorities, who would have felt threatened by a gospel that included a clear description of Christ's messianic kingdom.

### Summary

Christ intentionally downplayed his earthly kingdom and remained focused on the Father's future eternal kingdom of heaven. The most definitive statement about Christ's reign over this earth occurs in the apocalyptic book of Revelation, which speaks volumes about God's intention to make it difficult to discern and to keep it hidden from those hostile to the church.

And Paul, like Jesus, focused on our rescue from the tyranny of Satan's dominion of darkness—not a rescue from the tyranny of the Roman Empire. Paul must have realized that had he articulated a clear vision of a Jewish Messiah who would someday rule the world with all nations subservient to this Jewish King, there would have been a severe backlash against him and the young Christian church. This would have stunted the growth of the church at this critical stage of its development.

But God did not leave later generations in the dark. Without alarming the Roman authorities of a competing world empire, the stealthy book of Revelation conveys the truth to discerning believers about Christ's future millennial reign. Through the book of Revelation,

God gives us a window into the Old Testament, which contains an extensive description of Christ's earthly kingdom.

The subject of Christ's earthly kingdom was reserved for a later day, after the church was more firmly established. This is exactly what happened during the next few hundred years of the church, as Christianity made significant inroads into all strata of Roman society. The early church fathers began putting the pieces of the puzzle together. They began to link the millennium described in Revelation to the teachings of Isaiah and the prophets that describe Christ's earthly kingdom. As a result, many important church fathers began to articulate a literal millennial reign of Christ before the eternal kingdom of heaven.