

Throughout the pages of the Bible are scattered hundreds of prophecies about the Kingdom of God. Predictions were made concerning the time, place and circumstances which would accompany its inception. The first prophecies, dating back some two thousand years before Christ, were pretty vague and sketchy. For instance, Genesis 49:10 suggested some sort of ruler who would one day come from the tribe of Judah. We find in II Samuel 7:12-13 that a king would emerge from the descendants of David; and, that he would build a house for God's name. It might seem obvious that this prediction was fulfilled in David's son, Solomon, except for one thing: Long after Solomon's death, these same predictions continued to flow from the pens of God's prophets. About 700 BC, Isaiah was still looking for the "house of the Lord" to be established in Jerusalem and for all nations to flow into it (Isaiah 2:2-3). Likewise, he was still looking for a child to be born of which he said, "There will be no end to the increase of His government" and He will rule "on the throne of David and over His kingdom" (Isaiah 6:6-7).

We wonder: When would these things come to pass? From the tribe of Judah and from the family of David would come a descendent who would build a house for the Lord and would reign over a mighty kingdom. But when? When might He be expected? The prophet Daniel gives us another clue which is not so vague as those in earlier times. In the second chapter of Daniel we find a prophecy that four great empires would eventually rule the earth in succession. A simple check of history reveals that these kingdoms were the Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. Concerning the Roman empire Daniel said, "In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed" (Daniel 2:44). Thus, the Kingdom of God could be expected in the days of the Roman Empire -- the days in which Jesus lived and walked the earth.

As we might expect, then, the prophecies become even more specific in the books of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. In Luke 1:32-33, Mary is told about the child she would bear. Concerning Him it was said, "He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and His kingdom will have no end." The Scriptures have now pinpointed the identity of this long awaited King. And as He appeared on the public scene, Jesus came forth saying, "... the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 4:17). Indeed, throughout His ministry, Jesus continually talked about the Kingdom. He told the people to pray for the Kingdom to come (Matthew 6:10). He said that He would give them the "keys of the kingdom" (Matthew 16:19). And He used parables to tell what the kingdom would be like. In fact, He predicted that the appearance of God's Kingdom was very close. He said, "There are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the kingdom of God after it has come with power" (Mark 9:1).

From the tribe of Judah and the family of David would come a King. He would establish God's eternal Kingdom in the days of the Roman Empire and in the lifetime of those who heard Jesus speak. But it would not be in His lifetime; for after the death of Jesus we see His followers still awaiting the kingdom. In Luke 23:51, Joseph of Arimathea is described as one "who was waiting for the kingdom of God" ... even as he buried the body of his Lord. After Jesus' resurrection, and just before He ascended to heaven, His disciples were still asking, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) Then, in Acts 1:9, it says, "He was lifted up while they were looking on, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." Little did they realize that Jesus could never receive His kingdom until after His ascension through the clouds and His appearance before the Timeless God of Eternity. You see, the prophet Daniel had envisioned the ascension of Christ 550 years before it happened. He wrote, "I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him." Now, listen to what Daniel says, "And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed" (Daniel 7:13-14).

