

WORLD IMPROVEMENTS OCCUR SOON AFTER THE KINGDOM BEGINS

The teaching of the Watchtower Bible and Tract Society (WTBS) of the Jehovah's Witnesses is that the Kingdom of God was set up invisibly in 1914 and that by its expulsion of Satan from heaven this precipitated the worsening of world conditions that have occurred throughout the last 96 years. However, this does not fit the biblical picture of events. The WTBS scheme is based largely on Psalm 110:1, 2 and Revelation 12:7-9 which we will examine first:

- *Psalm 110:1, 2:*

“The utterance of Jehovah to my Lord is: ‘Sit at *my right hand* **until I place your enemies** as a stool for your feet.’ The rod of your strength Jehovah will *send out of Zion*, [saying:] ‘Go subduing (“*rule*” in other versions) **in the midst of your enemies.**”

From this passage Jehovah's Witnesses teach that Jesus has been ruling mankind invisibly “in the midst of [his] enemies” from a Zion in heaven in an invisible kingdom that was established in 1914 - a period of more than 96 years.

RESPONSE

This interpretation of Psalm 110:1, 2 by Jehovah's Witnesses is largely based upon a misunderstanding of the “Mount Zion” described in Hebrews 12:22-23 which says:

- ❖ “But you **have approached** a Mount Zion and a city of the living God, *heavenly Jerusalem*, and myriads of angels, in general assembly, and the congregation of the firstborn who have been enrolled in the heavens, and **God** the judge of all, and the spiritual lives of righteous ones made perfect, and **Jesus** the mediator of the new covenant” (*Heb. 12:22-23*).

However, this is a *present* condition of Christians just as in Ephesians 1:3 and 2:6 where **Christians on earth** are seen as being *in heaven representatively* through their union with Christ. The “*heavenly Jerusalem*,” situated on a literal Mount Zion, is the glorious city of the **future** which Christians have figuratively approached *now*. Concerning its inhabitants we learn that: “*respecting Zion it will be said: ‘Each and every one was born in her’*” (Ps. 87:5); yet men are not born in heaven. Also Jerusalem/Zion is “above” (Gal. 4:26) because it is vastly superior and originates with God; yet one does not need to go to heaven to approach God.

So in fulfilment of Psalm 110:1, 2, Jesus will be at Jehovah's right hand in heaven **only until the time comes** to begin placing his “*enemies as a stool for [his] feet*” at which time he will have descended to earth (1 Thess. 4:17; Zech 14:4). So it will be from a real literal Zion that Jesus will “Go subduing (“*rule*” in other versions) **in the midst of [his] enemies.**” Furthermore, Jehovah states prophetically that:

- ❖ “I have installed my king upon Zion my holy mountain ... You will **break** [or “shepherd”] them [*the nations*] with an iron sceptre ... And now, O kings, exercise insight ... and YOU may not **perish** from the way” (*Ps. 2:6, 7, 10, 12*).

So Jesus, after being established on his throne can go out of literal Zion to “Go subduing **in the midst of**” his prime enemies - the wild beast, the false prophet and “the rest” i.e. their armies (Rev. 19:12-21), and Satan during the earliest stage of the Millennium. **This does not fit in with a wait of 96 years for such breaking of the nations “with an iron sceptre” to take place.**

- *Revelation 12:7-9:*

“And war broke out in heaven: Michael and his angels battled with the dragon, and the dragon and its angels battled but it did not prevail...so down the great dragon was hurled...he was hurled down to the earth, and his angels were hurled down with him.”

“And I heard a loud voice in heaven say: “**Now** have come to pass the salvation and the power and **the kingdom** of our God and the authority of his Christ ... On this account be glad you heavens...**Woe for the earth** and for the sea, because the Devil has come down to YOU, having great anger, knowing he has a short period of time” (*Rev. 12:10-12*).

Because of the statement “*now have come to pass...the kingdom*” the Jehovah’s Witnesses explanation is that the kingdom was established at exactly the same time Satan was thrown out of heaven to cause woe for the earth. This also would mean that the Kingdom was set up before the Great Tribulation occurs.

RESPONSE

There are many Scriptures which show that the sequence of events is the very opposite to the teaching of Jehovah’s Witnesses, inasmuch as, the moment Satan is hurled down the intense but relatively short Great Tribulation begins. The last part of this tribulation **immediately precedes Jesus’ return** and the establishment of the Kingdom (Matt. 24:21, 29-31). Also Jesus returns just once and not in two phases as per JW teaching. (Please see Study 4, JESUS CANNOT HAVE RETURNED IN 1914). As shown in earlier studies Jesus has not yet returned.

Additionally, after the **narrative** of Revelation 12:1-9 the next passage is an **anonymous prayer of praise** to God concerning what will happen in the relatively near future. So because this praise is in poetic form, it does not describe events as being immediately sequential. This is just as with many of other statements in the middle of the book of Revelation which are anticipatory. So the passage in 12:10-12 is also **proleptic** (anticipatory). This is proven by noting what is said earlier:

❖ “And the seventh angel blew his trumpet. And loud voices occurred in heaven, saying: ‘The kingdom of the world **did become the kingdom** of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will rule as king forever and forever’” (*Rev. 11:15*).

Yet at this point in the events of Revelation there is only *an anticipation* of the establishment of the Kingdom and so the Hebrew prophetic past tense (proleptic) has been used. The *Word Biblical Commentary* says regarding these verses:

At this point the author inserts a hymnic passage consisting of vv 10-12, which comment on the significance of the expulsion of Satan from heaven...The temporal verb *arti* “now,” together with the aorist verb *egeneto*, which has perfective value,...indicates that the ascriptions of deliverance, power and kingship to God **are grounded in** the specific temporal occurrence of Satan’s expulsion from heaven narrated in v 9...If God’s kingship has already become a fact in 11:15, what can the duplicate statement in 12:10 mean? The answer must be that in the present text the coming or occurrence of the kingship of God is described **proleptically**.

Also Bible Commentator George Eldon Ladd states in his *Commentary on Revelation* that with reference to Revelation 12:10:

This announcement, like that in 11:15, is **proleptic** and looks forward to the consummation which has not yet occurred; but it has occurred in principle, for Satan is already a defeated foe...This defeat leads to the establishment of *the authority* of the Messiah of the world.

Bible Scholar Robert Govett notes regarding the “short period of time” that Satan has:

This ejection of the devil, then, cannot yet have taken place. For after it he has only 1260 days respite, and those persecuted by him have to endure only 1260 day’s exile: 12:14 and 13:5.

So the passage in verses 10-12 is a praise to God for the expulsion of Satan so that the next part of God's purpose is opened up in anticipation of the soon establishment of the Kingdom. It is separate from the preceding narrative and therefore does not occur at the exact time of Satan's expulsion which precipitates the Great tribulation. Furthermore, the Great tribulation precedes the establishment of the Kingdom. **Jesus' one time return is shown in Matthew 24: 21, 29 as occurring after the Great Tribulation.** (please see STUDY 4). It is at Jesus' return that the Kingdom is set up as he showed in the illustration of the man of noble birth travelling to a distant land to secure kingly power (Luke 19:11-15).

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THINGS THAT HAPPEN WHEN THE KINGDOM IS ESTABLISHED

SEPARATION OF SHEEP AND GOATS

- ❖ “When the Son of man arrives in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit down **on his glorious throne**...and he will separate people one from another...sheep and goats...”
(Matt. 25:31, 32).

Until the 1990s Jehovah's Witnesses taught that the separating of sheep from goats had been in progress since the setting up of the kingdom in 1914. However, since the 1990s the WBTS interprets this separating work as something that will begin in the future. Logically they should also move the time for the Son of Man to “sit down **on his glorious throne**” to the future because clearly these two events begin to happen at the same time:

- ❖ “And as for **the stone** that struck the image, it became a large mountain and **filled the whole earth**” (Dan. 2:35b).

This filling of “*the whole earth*” indicates that the kingdom will be on earth and that its expansion begins the moment it crushes the feet of the image. There is here no indication of an earlier establishment of the kingdom than on this occasion or of *any decades' long gap existing* between its setting up and the beginning of the crushing of the world's kingdoms.

DESTRUCTION OF ENEMIES

- ❖ “But his citizens hated him and sent out a body of ambassadors after him, to say, ‘We do not want this man to become king over us.’ ‘Eventually **when he got back** after having secured the kingly power, he commanded to be called to him these slaves...’ (Luke 19:14, 15).

*It is only **after his return** that the king orders the **execution of these hateful enemies**:*

- ❖ “Moreover, these enemies of mine **that did not want me to become king** over them **BRING** here and slaughter them before me” (Luke 19:27).

However, we did not see the slaughter of the Messianic king's enemies in 1914 or at any time since, and so the scenario is that:

- ❖ “...in the days of those kings the God of heaven **will set up a kingdom**...it will crush and **put an end to all these kingdoms**...forasmuch as you beheld that out of the mountain **a stone** was cut not by hands, and that it crushed the iron...” (Dan. 2:44).

The stone described in Daniel 2:25 is a symbol of God's kingdom. Now the phrase in 2:44 of “**will set up a kingdom**” shows that the kingdom is established at the same time that the stone strikes the feet of the image and crushes the worldly kingdoms; yet 1914 did not bring the *crushing* and putting “*an end to all these kingdoms*” of the world.

NATIONS WHICH SUBMIT TO THE KINGDOM

- ❖ “I kept on beholding until *the beast was killed* and its body was destroyed and it was given to the burning fire. But as for **the rest of the beasts** [*the other 3*], their **rulerships were taken away**, and there was a lengthening of life given to them for a time and a season” (*Dan. 7:11b*).

Evidently, these three co-existing rulers will not be destroyed at the time that the fourth beast is destroyed. Yet, they clearly submit to the rulership of Messiah (Ps. 2:12) because, after having lost their rulership they are allowed to live on “*for a time and a season.*” Nevertheless, we have not yet seen the destruction of the 4th beast at any time since the supposed setting up of the kingdom in 1914.

WORLD DISARMAMENT

- ❖ “And it must occur in the final part of the days [that] the mountain of the house of Jehovah will become firmly established...and to it **all the nations** must stream ... And he will certainly render **judgement among the nations** and set matters straight respecting many peoples; and *they* will have to beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning shares. **Nation will not lift up sword** against nation, **neither will they learn war any more**” (*Isa. 2:1-4*).

The WBTS explanation of this passage is that it refers to those people who, before the Millennium, come out of the nations to become Jehovah’s Witnesses and who will not take up arms. However, most of these individuals were not armed and never planned to take up arms anyway. Rather obviously the passage refers to **whole nations** who will be judged and cease to operate any kind of war machine. It is they, and not Christians, who will break up “*their swords and their spears.*” This situation evidently has yet to happen and according to Isaiah 2 God will bring it about “*in the final part of the days*” of the short transitional time of transfer of world power to Jesus. So the WBTS interpretation of a 1914 establishment of the kingdom fails because the world’s governments have full control of earth’s affairs and are fully armed up to now. So Jesus clearly has not been ruling in the midst of his enemies during the last 96 years. However, the placing of the enemies under Jesus’ feet is not something which is absolutely completed **until the end**; but is a “subduing (*ruling*)” of them throughout the Millennium as his kingship widens (*Dan. 2:35*):

- ❖ “Next, the end, when he [*Jesus*] hands over the kingdom to his God and Father, when he has brought to nothing all government and all authority and power. For he must rule as king until [God] has **put all enemies under his feet**. As the last enemy, death is to be brought to nothing.”
(1 Cor. 15:24- 26).

RESTORATION OF ALL THINGS BEGINS AS SOON AS JESUS LEAVES HEAVEN

- ❖ “...that he may send forth the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven, indeed, must hold within itself **until** the times of **restoration of all things** of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time” (*Acts 3:20, 21*).

This is not the restoration only of pure worship but of the restoration of “things of which God spoke through the mouth of his holy prophets of old time” involving humanity and resulting in “the new heavens and new earth.” So shortly after Jesus returns this restoration begins:

- ❖ “Jesus said to them: Truly I say to YOU, In **the recreation**, when the Son of Man sits down **on his glorious throne...**” (*Matt. 19:28*).

The ESV renders “In the recreation” as: “in the new world,” the NLT as “when the world is made new,” and Barclay as “at the rebirth of the world,” thereby demonstrating the fact that improving conditions will begin to exist very soon after the kingdom is established.

GOD’S WILL SOON TAKES PLACE

- ❖ “Let your kingdom come. Let **your will take place...**upon earth” (*Matt. 6:10*).

Again the scriptures give no indication of any decades’ long gap between when God’s kingdom comes

and when His will takes place on earth. Evidently, God's will is not being done at the present time by the vast majority of people since 1914.

CONCLUSION

It is entirely logical that after the establishment of the Kingdom and after dealing with his main enemies Jesus would immediately bring into effect the processes to disarm the nations and improve conditions in the world so that peace comes in a relatively short time. Yet the WBTS scenario has an invisible kingdom with invisible rulers who have accomplished nothing of any significance toward world peace or improvement over the last 96 years!

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