

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **WILL WE ALL BE EQUAL IN THE NEXT LIFE, WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ‘REIGN’ AND TO WHOM WILL THAT APPLY?**

*<sup>11</sup>The saying is trustworthy, for:*

*If we have died with him, we will also live with him;*

*<sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him;*

*if we deny him, he also will deny us;*

*2 Timothy 2:11-12 (ESV)*

**It seems clear that we will not all be equal in Heaven or on the new Earth. We will each be appointed to different levels of authority and honour and we will all have different roles.**

This is yet another controversial topic. People tend to get quite touchy if you suggest that we will not all be equal in Heaven. But the Bible makes it clear that we won't be. Neither will we be equal when we return to the Earth for the Millennium and for the eternal state on the new Earth and in the new Jerusalem. The stance taken by most of us is not to think about this question at all.

However, if you do raise it then most people seem to assume that we will all be equal in every way after we die. But that is a huge assumption to make, and an odd one. At any rate, the Bible never says anything to support it. In fact it says quite a lot to the contrary. For example, let's begin by looking at this verse:

*For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.*

*Luke 14:11 (RSV)*

This is a statement made by Jesus which has important implications for the question we are now examining. We know that some people are going to be exalted and some will be humbled. But how can that mean anything unless those two groups of people are going to have different levels of honour, status, role, position, rank etc?

It surely follows therefore that there are going to be distinctions and differentials between us after we die. Perhaps you might argue that the exalting or humbling that Jesus was referring to is all to occur during this present life, not in the future. Certainly it does also apply here and now, but I can see no valid basis for limiting its application *only* to this present life.

If that was the case, then many other passages would make no sense. Let's look at some. Consider first this passage from Matthew 19 where Jesus responds to a comment from Peter about what the apostles had given up for Him and what they might be entitled to expect from Him in return:

*<sup>27</sup> Then Peter said in reply, “Lo, we have left everything and followed you. What then shall we have?” <sup>28</sup> Jesus said to them, “Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. <sup>29</sup> And every one who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. <sup>30</sup> But many that are first will be last, and the last first.*

*Matthew 19:27-30 (RSV)*

Even from this short passage, a number of points emerge:

a) the apostles are going to sit on 12 thrones

- b) they will judge the 12 tribes of Israel
- c) those who have made great sacrifices will receive a hundredfold more in the life to come
- d) many that are first now will be last
- e) many that are last now will be first

How can any of these five things happen in the future if we are all going to be equal? If we were, then the last two passages quoted above would be particularly meaningless. How can there be people in *first* and *last* positions if we are all going to be the same?

Moreover how can it make any sense for the 12 apostles to sit on “*thrones*” and to “*judge*” the 12 tribes of Israel if they will not have any power, authority, status, jurisdiction etc? At least in those terms, and perhaps in other ways too, the apostles will be different from, and higher than, the rest of us.

Likewise, if some people are going to “*receive a hundredfold more in the life to come*” then surely it must follow that they will have some kind of assets, property or wealth of some description which the rest of us, who did not make so many sacrifices, will not have. So, at the very least, we will not all be equal in terms of what we *possess*.

If there is this proportionality to the rewards given, i.e. that some people will receive a hundredfold, then those who gave up 10 units in this life will end up with 1000 units in the next life. On the same basis, those who gave up 50 units will be given 5000.

So, even *within* the category of those people who receive this hundredfold rate of return, there is still going to be inequality because some of them will have sacrificed more or less than others to begin with. Thus that multiplier will apply to very different numbers in terms of the scale or magnitude of what we gave up for Jesus.

### **If some of us are going to be ‘first’ and others ‘last’, then there has to be some kind of hierarchy in the Kingdom of God**

If some of us are going to be *first* and others will be *last* then there clearly must be a hierarchy of some kind. If not, those words would mean nothing. Obviously, the factors which place a person at the top or the bottom will be different from the worldly criteria which we use in this life. Nevertheless, there will still have to be a hierarchy of some kind. That is the point. Consider this passage from Mark chapter ten:

<sup>35</sup> *Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. “Teacher,” they said, “we want you to do for us whatever we ask.”*

<sup>36</sup> *“What do you want me to do for you?” he asked.*

<sup>37</sup> *They replied, “Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.”*

<sup>38</sup> *“You don’t know what you are asking,” Jesus said. “Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?”*

<sup>39</sup> *“We can,” they answered.*

*Jesus said to them, “You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, <sup>40</sup> but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.”*

<sup>41</sup> *When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. <sup>42</sup> Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over*

*them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. <sup>43</sup>Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>44</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. <sup>45</sup>For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”*

*Mark 10:35-45 (NIV)*

From this passage we learn that:

- a) there will literally be two very special people who will be chosen for the ultimate honour, namely to sit at Jesus' left and right hand side when He reigns as King.
- b) There will also be some people who will be “*first*”, by which Jesus surely means that they will be higher, more senior, more honoured, more authoritative etc than others.
- c) Those people who are elevated to these higher positions, which He calls being ‘first’, will be selected on the basis of the degree to which they were servants, i.e. how well they served.

Of course, the factors, characteristics and actions which lead to a person's promotion in the Kingdom of God are very different from those which apply in this world. But the operative point is that it is confirmed that there is such a thing as *promotion*. That fact alone shows that there will be people in higher and lower positions.

They will also have differing levels of honour, status, possessions and wealth. Jesus Himself is an example of this. He was promoted by God the Father to the very highest place and it was done entirely on the basis of merit. It follows that the same principle of promotion on merit will determine our future position in the Kingdom.

### **Jesus Himself is the ultimate example of a person being promoted by God on the basis of merit**

The ultimate example of a man being promoted on the basis of His self-sacrifice and flawless service is Jesus Himself. We saw in the earlier passage in Matthew 19 that Jesus is going to “*sit on His glorious throne.*” We also know from Philippians that He is going to be elevated by God to have the very highest place, such that He will be the “*Name which is above every name*”:

*<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, <sup>10</sup> that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

*Philippians 2:5-11 (RSV)*

The above passage contains a really important insight into how God will promote and reward us. We are told of how Jesus: “*emptied Himself,.....took the form of a servant,.....humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.*”

What few people seem to notice is the very next phrase which says: “***Therefore God has highly exalted Him and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.....***” In other words, He was promoted *as a result* of His own actions and attitude. The point is that God promoted Jesus in these ways *because* He had humbled Himself etc.

There is cause and effect at work here. God the Father did not automatically promote Jesus to be the Name above all names simply because He was the Son of God. It had nothing to do with His existing

divine status and identity. He was promoted in these ways, and appointed to these roles, because of what He had done and how He had lived.

To a large degree that was due to the fact that he was the first and only man ever to perfectly obey the Law of Moses. He achieved all that even before He went to cross. My argument is that it is reasonable for us to infer from the way in which Jesus was promoted that the very same principle applies to us and will operate at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

That is we will be promoted, or not promoted, based on how we lived, what we did and what attitudes we had. Many Christians tend to shy away from using the word *merit* at all. It is a word that most evangelical Christians don't like. It has a ring about it that suggests being saved by our own good works rather than by grace through faith.

However, as we have seen, we are not talking here about how we are saved in the sense of being *justified*. Our present discussion is only about the basis on which Jesus will reward us for our actions and attitudes *after* we have already been justified.

**Jesus is also going to inherit the whole world, because He has been appointed by God the Father to be the “heir of all things”**

In addition to all the exalted titles that He has been given, Jesus has also been made the “*heir of all things*”. In other words, Jesus is going to inherit the whole world, indeed the whole universe. It will all be given to Him and He will rule over all of it:

*In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets; <sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*

*Hebrews 1:1-2 (RSV)*

The entire Creation is going to be placed in subjection to Jesus. He will then reign over everybody and everything in the whole Universe and His reign will also be eternal:

<sup>20</sup> *which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; <sup>22</sup> and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, <sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fulness of him who fills all in all.*

*Ephesians 1:20-23 (RSV)*

<sup>5</sup> *For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. <sup>6</sup> It has been testified somewhere,*

*“What is man that thou art mindful of him,  
or the son of man, that thou carest for him?”*

<sup>7</sup> *Thou didst make him for a little while lower than the angels,  
thou hast crowned him with glory and honor,*

<sup>8</sup> *putting everything in subjection under his feet.”*

*Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.*

*Hebrews 2:5-8 (RSV)*

*Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.”*

*Revelation 11:15 (RSV)*

So, it is clear that everything is going to be given to Jesus. He is the heir and everything will be His. Therefore it will all be His to administer, divide out, or give away, as He sees fit. He will distribute power, positions and possessions to those who are going to rule and reign under Him in His Kingdom. However, who will these people be? Does it mean *all* genuine believers, or only *some* of them?

**The Bible also says that there are going to be some people who will be fellow heirs with Jesus of the Kingdom which has been promised to Him**

Jesus is *the* heir. He inherits everything, with absolute title. However, we also know that at least some of His followers are going to be “heirs” alongside Him:

*Listen, my beloved brethren. Has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to those who love him?*

*James 2:5 (RSV)*

James does not make clear whether this status of being “*heirs of the Kingdom*” applies to *all* genuine Christians or only to *some*. However, the implication is that it is more limited and selective, because James says that God has chosen “*those who are poor in the world*”. That would not seem to apply to every believer, nor even to every genuine and faithful believer.

It seems to be referring to those who have given up much and avoided worldliness in this life. There would seem to be at least an element of *merit* involved in the selection. Indeed, in this regard, as we saw, we have God the Father’s promotion of Jesus Himself as a direct precedent. Jesus is going to be promoted to the highest place not because of *who He is* but because of *what He did*.

He has *earned* the highest place on the basis of merit. My point is that the very same principle will apply to all of us. Accordingly, we will be promoted or demoted according to what we did in this life and how we served. Likewise, this status of being an heir of the Kingdom alongside Jesus would seem to fit in with that overall pattern, or principle, of the Kingdom being a meritocracy.

If we were to divide up the whole Church into groups, at least in the West, then the majority probably does not know much, if anything, about the ‘inheritance’ that is available to Christians or about being an ‘heir’ alongside Christ. Even those who do know something about it tend not to give it much thought. At any rate, it is rarely emphasised, or even spoken about at all. Clearly, that is the wrong approach.

There is a smaller group which does think about the prospect of being an heir but they make a different mistake. That is to assume that every one of us will inherit *automatically*, simply because we are Christians. That would not seem to be the case, as far as I can see. Consider this next passage from Romans:

*<sup>15</sup> For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” <sup>16</sup> it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, <sup>17</sup> and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.*

*Romans 8:15-17 (RSV)*

This passage speaks of us being “*children of God*” and “*fellow heirs with Christ*”. However, there is an important condition within verse 17 above that few people seem to notice. Or, even if they do, they don’t speak about it much. That is where it says “*...provided we suffer with Him.....*” However, what does that mean?

Is this status of being a “*fellow heir with Christ*” only available to those who have suffered with Christ in some way? It would seem to be so. The next question we need to ask is what exactly is

meant by the word ‘*suffer*’? Moreover, what kind of suffering and how intense or prolonged does it need to be in order to satisfy the condition? I don’t see any clear answer to that in the Bible.

Nevertheless, it does seem clear that in order to become a “fellow heir with Christ” we need to have become sufficiently identified with Christ as to arouse the opposition of this world system and the worldly people in it, such that we suffer at their hands in some way.

Presumably it does not require that we become martyrs, because the passage makes no mention of that. It refers only to our needing to “*suffer with Him*”. That can, and does, occur regularly for many believers, without them having to go so far as to have to die for their faith.

I do not feel able to be more specific than that. It may be that Jesus will give a very broad definition to the word ‘*suffer*’ and include those who have only experienced persecution and opposition in small or occasional ways. Or it may be that He will define it more narrowly, setting the bar at a much higher level. We shall have to wait and see.

What we can say is that suffering with and for Christ, by reason of our close allegiance to Him, should not be seen as a wholly negative thing. At the very least, such suffering is not unproductive and may well be the key to our making real progress in our walk as disciples, especially if it is our aim to be heirs alongside Christ.

#### **At least some of us are going to “*reign*” with Jesus at various levels of authority**

In addition to being heirs, some of us are going to reign with Jesus. It is not only the 12 apostles who are going to do so. There will be others too who will also reign, presumably at many different levels of seniority, provided we meet His conditions, and He is pleased with our service for Him:

*and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God,  
and they shall reign on the earth.”*

*Revelation 5:10 (ESV)*

Here again, in 2 Timothy, apostle Paul appears to link reigning with Christ in His future Kingdom with our having previously endured, or even died, with Him in this life:

*<sup>11</sup> The saying is sure:*

*If we have died with him, we shall also live with him;*

*<sup>12</sup> if we endure, we shall also reign with him;*

*if we deny him, he also will deny us;*

*2 Timothy 2:11-12 (RSV)*

What exactly does it mean to “*die with Him*”? Is it to be taken literally, or does it refer to our dying metaphorically, such as where we die to self and crucify our flesh nature? It would seem to have a broad definition because the very use of the word ‘*endure*’ in verse 12 above implies that we can become qualified to reign with Jesus even if we only endure rather than die for Him.

That point is supported by this next passage, in which Jesus Himself says, in the book of Revelation, that certain believers, i.e. those who are “*victorious*” and who “*do my will to the end*” will be given “*authority over nations*”:

*To the one who is victorious and does my will to the end, I will give authority over the nations—  
<sup>27</sup> that one ‘will rule them with an iron scepter and will dash them to pieces like pottery’—just as I  
have received authority from my Father.*

*Revelation 2:26-27 (NIV)*

Those who are chosen to reign in these ways will begin by reigning during the 1000 year Millennium, which will begin when Jesus returns to the Earth:

*The saying is trustworthy, for:*

*If we have died with him, we will also live with him;*

*<sup>12</sup> if we endure, we will also reign with him;*

*if we deny him, he also will deny us;*

*2 Timothy 2:11-12 (ESV)*

*<sup>4</sup> Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. <sup>5</sup> The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This is the first resurrection. <sup>6</sup> Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with him for a thousand years.*

*Revelation 20:4-6 (ESV)*

However it would seem that this arrangement, by which at least some people will rule and reign, will also continue on, beyond the 1000 year Millennial Kingdom. That is it will last into the eternal state, when a new Heaven and a new Earth are created. At any rate, the Bible says nothing to suggest that the status of being an heir and of reigning with Jesus is only for the Millennium.

One assumes therefore that it will continue for eternity. If so, then that underlines even more emphatically the immense importance of doing well at the Judgment Seat of Christ, because so much depends on it, not only for the duration of the Millennium, but presumably also for eternity thereafter.

### **What does it mean to ‘reign’?**

The Bible tells us very little about what is actually involved in reigning and what exactly it will mean. One therefore has to fall back to some extent, on our understanding of what it means to reign in this life. On that basis, it will presumably involve similar concepts of having authority, the right to judge and the power to make executive decisions.

Of course, those who reign in God’s Kingdom will not do so in the same proud, worldly, sinful way that so many people rule and reign in this life. It will be operated in a godly way and will involve servant leadership. Those who reign will have a deep and genuine pastoral concern for those whom they lead.

Nevertheless, having emphasised all of that, reigning will still involve the exercise of real authority and power. Given that Jesus Himself will be reigning as an absolute monarch, not as an elected politician, He will choose to delegate to His subordinates in much the same way as any absolute monarch would.

That is He will pass on delegated authority which will be effectively absolute. The crucial difference is that those who reign under Him will be careful to do *His* will, not their own. They will be people of real power with the ability to judge and to make real decisions. Yet they will be careful to exercise that power as Jesus would have done, and in accordance with what they know His will to be.

## **Where, how, and over whom would we potentially be able to reign?**

There is very good reason to expect that in the Millennium, and even in the eternal state thereafter, the world will be organised along national lines, as it is now. At any rate, we know that there will be Gentile nations, because we are told that they will come up to Jerusalem to worship. We learn of this in Zechariah:

*<sup>16</sup> Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths. <sup>17</sup> And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. <sup>18</sup> If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths. <sup>19</sup> This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.*

*Zechariah 14:16-19 (NASB)*

Jeremiah also speaks in the same way:

*At that time they will call Jerusalem 'The Throne of the Lord,' and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the Lord; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart.*

*Jeremiah 3:17 (NASB)*

Accordingly, there are going to be distinct nations, with identifiable national boundaries, just as we have now. Therefore, it would appear that we will each live within particular countries and also within villages, towns and cities. Those places, large or small, will all need to be governed in some way and one assumes that it will involve similar kinds of power as we see being exercised by those who govern us now.

The Earth will be populated by those saved believers, in their resurrection bodies, who survive the Great Tribulation. They will live on into the Millennium and they will have children and steadily repopulate the Earth. By the end of the 1000 years, the world's population is likely to be very large indeed, probably larger than it is now. In the early part of the Millennium those people, who will be living in their mortal bodies, will all be believers.

Therefore, every person on Earth at the start of the Millennium will be saved. However, as time goes by, more and more of them will refuse to repent or to follow Jesus, even though He is physically present on the Earth. We know that, because, at the end of the Millennium, a proportion of them will be incited by Satan to rebel against Jesus, until He crushes their rebellion:

*<sup>7</sup> When the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison, <sup>8</sup> and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together for the war; the number of them is like the sand of the seashore. <sup>9</sup> And they came up on the broad plain of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city, and fire came down from heaven and devoured them. <sup>10</sup> And the devil who deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are also; and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

*Revelation 20:7-10 (NASB)*

## **At least some of us will be appointed to reign over the people who are in their mortal bodies during the Millennium**

At any rate, the point is that during the Millennium one group of people over whom the Church, or at least parts of it, could reign, would be these believers who are still in their mortal bodies. They will



be saved believers, at least at the start of the Millennium. However, they will not be part of that privileged group which we call '*the Church*'.

Resurrected Christians, in their eternal, indestructible resurrection bodies, will also be living on the Earth, alongside those believers who are still be in their mortal bodies. They will all live alongside each other, the resurrected and the mortal, in each of the nations.

Some of those who have been resurrected will be appointed by Jesus to govern some specified area, or to exercise some particular function. However, the implication is that they cannot *all* reign, because if that was so, then over whom would anybody reign? Just as at present, there will have to be rulers and also those who are ruled over.

Therefore those reigning, even if they are numerous in absolute terms, would still be a minority, just as they are now. How could it be otherwise? However, authority will not only be exercised over geographical areas, with people appointed to lead villages, towns, countries and nations. There will also be a need for people to lead and have authority over particular functions or offices, just as we have today.

So, somebody will have to be appointed by Jesus to be in charge of transport, education, agriculture and so on. There will need to be similar functions at local or regional levels too. Thus there will be scope for vast numbers of people to at least be put in charge of something, at some level. That's because there will be so many different things to do, just as there are now.

Accordingly, the definition of the words 'rule' or 'reign' will need to be understood broadly. We can't assume that it only applies to kings and Prime Ministers, any more than it does now. For example, there are probably tens of thousands, or even hundreds of thousands, of people who rule or reign in some kind of way in the United Kingdom today.

It can't be said that only the Queen and the Government do so. I feel sure that the same will apply in the Kingdom of God. The leadership will be wide and varied and will be spread amongst a great many people, at local, regional and national levels.

Nonetheless, it would also seem inevitable that some of us will not reign at all, in any capacity, or that we will only reign at some very local, junior or subordinate level. That is some of us may exert a small amount of authority but only under others who have been appointed to higher, or even much higher, levels.

**The Bible tells us specifically about the future role of King David. He will serve as Jesus' deputy, ruling over Israel.**

At the very top, as the leading nation on Earth, will be Israel. That is where Jesus will reign, as King of Israel and of the whole Earth and universe. However, the resurrected King David will serve as Jesus' deputy. In addition, as we saw earlier in the passage from Matthew 19:27-30, the 12 apostles will also serve as rulers of the 12 tribes of Israel. They will presumably be serving under King David, i.e. my understanding is that they will be junior to him.

Let's look briefly at what the Bible says about the future roles of the resurrected King David. He will reign in Jerusalem with the title of '*prince*' and will perform a number of important functions. For example, he will serve in the new Temple that will be built in the Millennium. However, the LORD Himself, i.e. Jesus, will be in overall command:

*<sup>22</sup> therefore, I will deliver My flock, and they will no longer be a prey; and I will judge between one sheep and another. <sup>23</sup> "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed*

*them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David will be prince among them; I the Lord have spoken.*

*<sup>25</sup> “I will make a covenant of peace with them and eliminate harmful beasts from the land so that they may live securely in the wilderness and sleep in the woods. <sup>26</sup> I will make them and the places around My hill a blessing. And I will cause showers to come down in their season; they will be showers of blessing. <sup>27</sup> Also the tree of the field will yield its fruit and the earth will yield its increase, and they will be secure on their land. Then they will know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the bars of their yoke and have delivered them from the hand of those who enslaved them.*

*<sup>28</sup> They will no longer be a prey to the nations, and the beasts of the earth will not devour them; but they will live securely, and no one will make them afraid. <sup>29</sup> I will establish for them a renowned planting place, and they will not again be victims of famine in the land, and they will not endure the insults of the nations anymore. <sup>30</sup> Then they will know that I, the Lord their God, am with them, and that they, the house of Israel, are My people,” declares the Lord God.*

*Ezekiel 34:22-30 (NASB)*

Jeremiah also addresses this issue about David:

*<sup>8</sup> “And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord of hosts, that I will break the yoke from off their neck, and I will burst their bonds, and strangers shall no more make servants of them. <sup>9</sup> But they shall serve the Lord their God and David their king, whom I will raise up for them.*

*Jeremiah 30:8-9 (RSV)*

From the book of Isaiah we also learn that:

*“...the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before his elders he will manifest his glory.”*

*Isaiah 24:23(b) (RSV)*

The passage above from Isaiah is a clear reference to Jesus Himself. It is He who will be the King in Israel. It does not mean David. Next, in Ezekiel, we are told that David will serve as a prince over the people of Israel forever:

*<sup>22</sup> and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms. <sup>23</sup> They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.*

*<sup>24</sup> “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them. <sup>25</sup> They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever. <sup>26</sup> I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever. <sup>27</sup> My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people. <sup>28</sup> And the nations will know that I am the Lord who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever.””*

*Ezekiel 37:22-28 (NASB)*

## **The person, referred to by Ezekiel as ‘the prince’ is King David, not Jesus**

Some people think that the person referred to as David, or as the prince, is actually Jesus Himself, i.e. reigning in His capacity as the Son of David. However, that cannot be right. The book of Ezekiel says many things about this person which make it quite clear that it is not referring to Jesus, but to David himself. For one thing, we are told of the various functions that David will perform in the Temple. These are clearly not suitable for Jesus to perform:

*It shall be the prince’s part to provide the burnt offerings, the grain offerings and the drink offerings, at the feasts, on the new moons and on the sabbaths, at all the appointed feasts of the house of Israel; he shall provide the sin offering, the grain offering, the burnt offering and the peace offerings, to make atonement for the house of Israel.”*

*Ezekiel 45:17 (NASB)*

The person referred to as the prince is not Jesus. We know that because we are told that he also provides an offering *for himself*, which Jesus would have no need, or reason, to do. Moreover, it says that the offering is made *to* the LORD, not *by* the LORD:

<sup>21</sup> *“In the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, you shall have the Passover, a feast of seven days; unleavened bread shall be eaten. <sup>22</sup> On that day the prince shall provide for himself and all the people of the land a bull for a sin offering. <sup>23</sup> During the seven days of the feast he shall provide as a burnt offering to the Lord seven bulls and seven rams without blemish on every day of the seven days, and a male goat daily for a sin offering. <sup>24</sup> He shall provide as a grain offering an ephah with a bull, an ephah with a ram and a hin of oil with an ephah. <sup>25</sup> In the seventh month, on the fifteenth day of the month, at the feast, he shall provide like this, seven days for the sin offering, the burnt offering, the grain offering and the oil.”*

*Ezekiel 45:21-25 (NASB)*

Moreover, we are told that the prince will *worship*. That would be entirely appropriate for David to do, but not really for Jesus:

*The prince shall enter by way of the porch of the gate from outside and stand by the post of the gate. Then the priests shall provide his burnt offering and his peace offerings, and he shall worship at the threshold of the gate and then go out; but the gate shall not be shut until the evening.*

*Ezekiel 46:2 (NASB)*

The position is made even clearer by this next passage which refers to the prince’s *inheritance* and to the fact that he has *sons* who share that inheritance with him. Therefore it must mean the resurrected David and his resurrected sons, because Jesus has no sons to share anything with:

<sup>16</sup> *‘Thus says the Lord God, “If the prince gives a gift out of his inheritance to any of his sons, it shall belong to his sons; it is their possession by inheritance. <sup>17</sup> But if he gives a gift from his inheritance to one of his servants, it shall be his until the year of liberty; then it shall return to the prince. His inheritance shall be only his sons’; it shall belong to them. <sup>18</sup> The prince shall not take from the people’s inheritance, thrusting them out of their possession; he shall give his sons inheritance from his own possession so that My people will not be scattered, anyone from his possession.”’*

*Ezekiel 46:16-18 (NASB)*

**We can be quite certain that ‘the prince’ is the literal King David and that Ezekiel is not referring to Jesus**

The strongest argument of all is that throughout chapter 48, we are told of areas of land which will be allocated to David the prince and also of various other parcels of land that will be given to others.

This clearly means David, not Jesus, since He inherits the whole universe, not just particular parcels of land, however large they might be:

*<sup>21</sup> “The remainder shall be for the prince, on the one side and on the other of the holy allotment and of the property of the city; in front of the 25,000 cubits of the allotment toward the east border and westward in front of the 25,000 toward the west border, alongside the portions, it shall be for the prince. And the holy allotment and the sanctuary of the house shall be in the middle of it. <sup>22</sup> Exclusive of the property of the Levites and the property of the city, which are in the middle of that which belongs to the prince, everything between the border of Judah and the border of Benjamin shall be for the prince.*

*Ezekiel 48:21-22 (NASB)*

We see therefore that the resurrected David will have a very major role to play, ruling and reigning over the Jewish people. He will do so as the Deputy to Jesus, who is the King of kings and Lord of lords. David’s duties and privileges will clearly be extensive.

The position will be similar, for those resurrected Christians who will be appointed to rule and reign in various ways, and in various places, throughout the Gentile world. So, David’s appointment to this role illustrates how we too have the opportunity to be given positions of power and authority, albeit at a lower level than David.

It will be fascinating to watch all of that take shape and to see these great figures from the history of the Church who will be resurrected and given leading roles in the Gentiles nations. One assumes that men like John Wycliffe, William Tyndale, William Carey, James Hudson Taylor and many others are likely to be in high positions.

That said, we can’t be absolutely sure, even for them, and will need to find out when the time comes. There will also be many other believers whose lives impressed Jesus, even though we have never heard of them. We may therefore be in for some real surprises when we find out who our new leaders are going to be. There will also be some big surprises about those who are *not* going to be in senior positions in the Kingdom of God, even though they were very famous Christians in this life.