

The Kingdom of God on Earth

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1. A vision of the kingdom

What is the long-term future of this world? Is the Earth going to be destroyed by climate change? Will the entire population of the world be wiped out by an uncontrollable pandemic? Will the world run out of food and water leading to the death of billions? Will terrorism ever end? Will science and technology come to the rescue and solve these problems that threaten the very existence of mankind? These are all vital questions?

Many futurists try to predict the future of mankind. The Bible also paints a picture of the future, but it is very different from that predicted by the futurists. The purpose of this book is to investigate the vision of the future presented by the Bible. In a nutshell, the Bible predicts that all the major problems facing mankind will be solved. The Bible predicts that eventually, even the hardest problem of all, death, will be solved. Before that can happen, the Lord Jesus Christ must return to the Earth to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. This is the vision presented in the Bible.

An intriguing verse is found in Proverbs 29:18 “Where there is no vision the people perish, but he that keepeth the law, happy is he.” What is the message of this verse? At a superficial level, it could mean that some kind of vision is needed to give direction and meaning to our lives. No doubt this is generally true. For example, all successful business ventures start with a vision, generally called a business plan. A building starts with a vision and the details are developed via an architectural plan etc.

The reference to God’s law suggests that this verse is talking about spiritual rather than literal vision – although of course if a whole community were literally blind they would have trouble surviving. A spiritual vision is essential for navigating to the kingdom. The words of Jesus come to mind, “No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:62). The purpose of a spiritual vision is to keep us focussed on our journey to the kingdom.

Many of us have had difficult issues and problems to face in life. For example, you might have a chronic or terminal illness, be in an unhappy relationship, experienced a traumatic divorce, have difficulties with children, lost a child or spouse, lost your job, be suffering financial hardship, undergoing a crisis of faith. In summary, you could be in a bad place. Even if everything is going fine in life, ultimately there is no escape from death. However, the Bible contains a great message of hope. The Gospel; summarised in Acts 8:12, as “the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ.”

The need for focussing on the kingdom is underlined by the words of the Apostle Paul to Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his

appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7). From this verse, it is clear that all who receive a crown of righteousness (symbolic of receiving eternal life in the kingdom) will in some way have loved the return of Jesus. This is a major challenge that we all face – to deeply desire the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. Most of us really do want the return of Jesus although at times we might have nagging doubts.

We may look at our lives and become despondent and see ourselves as spiritual failures and not at all suitable for God’s kingdom. In spite of our failures, God wants us all to be there. Jesus said, “Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32).

We can take great comfort from the fact that no matter how difficult our circumstances, Jesus will return and the kingdom will be established. And it does not matter what people do or say to us, they can’t stop the kingdom from coming. And no one can stop us from being in the kingdom if we really want to be there.

A picture of the kingdom

All of us have some kind of mental picture of the kingdom. Maybe we imagine a pastoral scene in which the pace of life is much slower than today. Maybe we imagine a world free of email, text messages, iPods, iPhones, computers and the Internet.

Some of us may imagine the opposite – a world even more advanced technologically than today. Irrespective of the technological aspect of our vision, all of us imagine a world where people are much happier than today – a world free from the blight of hunger, disease, illicit drugs and rampant crime, a world free from the adverse effects of climate change.

I used to live in the UK, not noted for warm weather and cloudless skies. Consequently, my personal vision of the kingdom was of a tropical paradise. Paradoxically, now that I live in an actual tropical paradise, Queensland my vision of the kingdom is of rural England. Of course, it is naive to think that in the kingdom the world will be a tropical paradise from pole to pole.

I would like to describe an event in my early life that inspired me to embark on this study of the kingdom. The year was 1968, or thereabouts, and I was 10 years old. I was sitting in a Christadelphian meeting in Bournemouth, a town on the south coast of England. The speaker, David Livingstone, was talking about the return of Jesus. He made the point that we will not read about the return of Jesus in the newspaper, and soon after an airline ticket arrive in the post for a flight to somewhere in the Middle East to meet the Lord Jesus Chrsit. He went on to say forcibly “It won’t be like that brethren and sisters!” This set my imagination going, and I asked myself the question what will it really be like in the kingdom? Several decades later, this book is the result.

I was taught about the return of Jesus and the kingdom from an early age. I remember my mother telling me that the kingdom will be so good that we can’t imagine what it will be like. At the time, I thought this meant that the sky, trees and grass would be a different colour!

A few years later, I came across some infrared images in a magazine in which the sky looked dark and the vegetation a brilliant pink. For some reason, I imagined that the kingdom would look like this. Later, I realised that my mother meant that the world would be better environmentally and socially rather than physically different. In the kingdom, the sky will still be blue and the grass will still be green.

The nearness of the return of Jesus

Each generation has hoped they would see the return of Jesus. Of course, the return of Jesus can only happen to one generation and can never be more than one lifetime away for an individual. A general complaint is that 'life is short'. Jacob said as much when he came before Pharaoh 130 years old and described his days as being "few and evil" (Genesis 47:9). James speaks of our life as a "...a vapour, that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away" (James 4:14).

It is clear from the writings of the New Testament (NT) that Jesus' disciples and first century saints expected the return of Jesus at any time. This is demonstrated in the Lord's prayer "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven..." For the past 2,000 years believers have always prayed and hoped for God's kingdom to be established on the earth.

The Mount Olivet prophecy

Before we get into our study proper we need to briefly deal with some background information. We will begin this section by going back 2,000 years in our imagination and stand next to Jesus and his disciples on the Mount of Olives, east of the city of Jerusalem. Six weeks after the resurrection Jesus said good-bye to his disciples and ascended into the sky to meet his Father face to face in heaven for the first time.

As the disciples strained their necks watching Jesus ascend until he disappeared in a cloud, two angels appeared and told the disciples that one day Jesus would come back to the earth, Acts 1:10,11 "Now when he [Jesus] had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; Which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven." This is the main reference to the return of Jesus in the Bible. Altogether there are about 300 references to the return of Jesus in the NT and 700 in the Old Testament (OT).

Just before Jesus went up into heaven, his disciples asked him if he was going to restore the kingdom to Israel at that time, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). What did the disciples mean by this question?

We need to understand the history of the times to fully appreciate the disciples' question. In AD 33, Israel was part of the Roman Empire and therefore under Roman rule. The disciples hoped that Jesus would liberate Israel from the Romans.

Jesus' answered, "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know times or seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts 1:7). This was in fact nothing new, as Jesus had said to his disciples six weeks before: "But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matthew 24:36). When Jesus went up into heaven, he himself did not know when he was coming back to the earth – only God knew.

Today, we still do not know the actual date of the return of Jesus, although we are given a rough indication. For example, a major sign that the return of Jesus is close is the fact that Israel is a nation-state once again.

Jesus preached the gospel of the kingdom of God

When Jesus was on the Earth 2,000 years ago, he travelled throughout the northern parts of Israel preaching the kingdom of God: "Now after that John was put into prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel." (Mark 1:14,15).

Jesus alluded to the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount, for example he said: "the meek shall inherit the earth". Nearly everyone in the entire world would agree that this is not even remotely true today. In fact, the absolute opposite is true, today the meek are trampled on all over the earth! Jesus is obviously referring to a quite different world from his own time and the world of today.

From the disciples' question to Jesus we can infer that Jesus told his disciples that the kingdom of Israel was going to be restored in the future. We also discover, which may come as a surprise, that the kingdom of God actually existed on the Earth in the past – 1 Chronicles 29:23 "Then Solomon sat on the throne of the LORD as king instead of David his father, and prospered; and all Israel obeyed him." At that time the kingdom of God was limited to the boundaries of Israel and only lasted for 40 years – the kingdom of God on Earth in seed form.

We can learn a lot about the kingdom of God by looking at Solomon's reign, which we might call a cameo of the kingdom. For example, we read in 1 Chronicles 22:9 "Behold, a son shall be born to thee, who shall be a man of rest; and I will give him rest from all his enemies round about: for his name shall be Solomon, and I will give peace and quietness unto Israel in his days." In the Hebrew language, the name Solomon means *peaceable* and so to a Hebrew speaker there would be a clear link between Solomon's name and the peaceful character of his kingdom.

As we have seen, the primary reference to the return of Jesus to the Earth is in Acts 1. Let's go back to Acts 1 and have a look at the first three verses. Acts 1:1-3 "The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach. Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Spirit had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: To whom also he shewed himself alive by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God:"

The purpose of the kingdom

What is the purpose of the kingdom? To answer this question, we need to take a few steps back and consider why God created Adam and Eve. God's purpose was to produce men and women who had the potential to become like himself. This is the meaning of the phrase "image and likeness of God" in Genesis 1:26.

In 1 Corinthians 11:7 we read that Adam was created in the "image and glory of God". The word "image" in both Genesis and Corinthians refers to physical form. The word "likeness" in Genesis 1:26 is translated as "glory" in 1 Corinthians 11:7. What is this telling us? Does this mean that Adam and Eve were created with shining skin? No. We discover that God's glory is his character, as described in Exodus 33:18 – 34:7.

Clearly Adam and Eve were not created *with* God's character, as character requires the experience of life to be developed. The creation of Adam and Eve with God's glory means they had the *capacity* to develop characters like God.

In spite of the events in the Garden of Eden, i.e. the failure of Adam and Eve to obey God's injunction on eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the entry of sin and death into the world, and Adam and Eve's ejection from the garden, God's purpose remained unchanged. It is still God's purpose to fill this earth with men and women who perfectly reflect his wonderful character.

The kingdom is the next stage in God's plan to effect this. The situation in the kingdom is described in Habakkuk 2:14 "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea." The situation beyond the kingdom is described in Numbers 14:21 "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the LORD."

At first sight, these two verses appear to be saying the same thing, however, notice that there is a subtle difference. In Habakkuk 2:14 (and Isaiah 11:9) we read that the earth will be filled with the *knowledge* of God's glory, whereas Numbers 14:21 says that the earth will be filled with the *actual* glory of God. In the kingdom, not everyone will have the character of God but everyone will know God and be living in an environment conducive to the development of a godly character. Beyond the kingdom, everyone will be like God.

Our lives now are a training ground for the kingdom

Some of us have been through very difficult circumstances and may wish we could turn back the clock. However, our experiences in this life will be put to good use in the kingdom. In the kingdom, the collective life experience of the saints will be required to assist the mortal population through the difficulties that will occur in the kingdom. Human nature will be the same in the kingdom and, no matter how good the environment, problems will still occur.

The nation of Israel took 38 years to travel through the wilderness from Egypt to the Promised Land. This journey could have been done in just a few weeks. However, God decided that Israel (with the exception of Joshua and Caleb) were not ready to enter the Promised Land.

God introduced a 38-year delay to get Israel ready. Although the 38 years could be considered a complete waste of time, it was necessary for the shaping of the character of Israel. In the end Israel did actually enter the land.

Everyone in the kingdom will have had their own personal journey to the kingdom. We often become despondent about our lives. We may have done some things that were a complete waste of time. There may be parts of our lives that appear to be a complete waste of time but which nevertheless are part of our personal journey. Our personal journey makes us who we are. The important thing is to get to the kingdom. When we're there our present troubles will fade away to insignificance – Isaiah 65:17 “For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.”

2. The Return

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ will be the most important event the world has seen since Jesus' death and resurrection nearly 2,000 years ago. Ever since Jesus ascended to heaven, believers have always expected his imminent return - as exemplified by the disciples' question to Jesus in Acts 1:6 that we looked at in the previous chapter.

Jesus taught his disciples to pray "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is done in heaven..." If this prayer is to mean anything, the person praying must want the kingdom to come – the quicker the better. Sadly, it is often the case (and I admit to sometimes falling into this category) that we pray for the kingdom to come – but not just yet – we just need a bit more time to get ready.

The disciples were given a direct vision of the kingdom in the form of an event known as the *transfiguration*. There are three accounts of the transfiguration in the NT – Matthew 17:1-13; Mark 9:1-13 and Luke 9:28-36. The event occurred while the disciples were with Jesus on top of a mountain when they found themselves enshrouded in cloud and saw Jesus talking with Moses and Elijah.

The disciples must have known that Jesus was speaking to Moses and Elijah from the topic of the conversation. We read in Luke 9:30-31 "And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem." The Greek word translated as *decease* is *exodus* and therefore there is a clear link with Moses. Moses lead the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. Jesus lead the exodus of everyone, Jews and Gentiles, from the grave to eternal life. What about Elijah? Elijah will lead the exodus of the natural Jews from the nations to the land of Israel after the return of Jesus.

To set the transfiguration in context we need to take into account the words of Jesus prior to the event – "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power. And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves and he was transfigured before them" (Mark 9:1-2):

How did the disciples *see* the kingdom of God? Did they actually go there by travelling into the future? Were Moses and Elijah actually raised from the dead so that they could talk to Jesus? The Bible is clear on this point – the transfiguration was a vision and so Moses and Elijah were not physically present. "And as they came down the mountain, Jesus charged them saying, Tell the vision to no man..." (Matthew 17:9).

The Greek word translated as vision is the regular word for vision used in the NT, as seen for example in Acts 9:10 "And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to

him said the Lord in a vision...” In the case of the transfiguration, the disciples were able to see an event that will actually take place in the future in the kingdom. It is possible that at some point – maybe near the beginning of the kingdom – that we will actually see Jesus, Moses and Elijah talking together exactly as the disciples saw in the transfiguration.

Paul’s epistles contain frequent references to the return of Jesus. For example, every chapter in 1 Thessalonians contains a reference to the return. A particular case in point is the Olivet Prophecy found in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21. The first part of the prophecy describes events leading up to the destruction of Israel in AD 70 and the second part deals with the return of Jesus and establishment the kingdom of God. The gap of about 1940 years between the two events is glossed over as if it doesn’t exist. Why should that be the case? The reason is that during the period known as the *Diaspora*, Israel was *dead* as a nation and therefore there was nothing to write about.

This is analogous to there being nothing to write about the life of a dead person – for example Abraham. Abraham has been dead for about 4,000 years, and is soon to be raised. If we were to write about the life of Abraham at the end of the kingdom, we could write about his life in 2,000 BC and his life during the 1,000 years of the kingdom, but there would be nothing to write in the intervening 4,000-year period.

The Olivet Prophecy reads as if there was only a short gap between the destruction of Jerusalem and the return of Jesus and establishment of the kingdom. We might use the analogy of someone walking towards two posts– say in a field. If the alignment is right only the first fence post will be seen as it obscures the second. However, when the first post is passed the second is revealed. So it is with the Olivet Prophecy.

From the perspective of the disciples in AD 33 it looked as if Jerusalem would be destroyed by the Romans, and then immediately after Jesus would descend from heaven to liberate Israel from the Romans and re-establish the kingdom of Israel in an expanded form to cover the whole earth. For someone reading the OP before AD 70 it would be impossible to tell there is a gap of over 1900 years between the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the return of Jesus.

In discussing the return of Jesus to the Earth it is essential to look at the last book of the Bible, the book of Revelation. The title of this book in the Greek language is the *Apocalypse of Christ*, which means the *Revealing of Jesus Christ*. Put simply, the book of Revelation contains a description of events leading up to the return of Jesus to the Earth.

The scope of the book is set out in the first verse, Revelation 1:1 “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.” The expression “shortly come to pass” indicates that the prophecy describes events that were to occur soon after the time of writing in about AD 96. Since God’s servants have lived at all epochs between the 1st and the 21st centuries these words must be equally applicable to all intervening periods. The

implication is that the Apocalypse contains a symbolic description of events spaced throughout history such that there has always been something about to happen in the life of a believer.

The sequence of historical events in the book of Revelation are symbolised by seven seals, seven trumpets, seven vials and finally seven thunders. The book of Revelation has a telescopic structure with the trumpets, vials and thunders all packed into the seventh seal (a wax seal of the type used to keep a scroll rolled up). Working backwards, the seven thunders are packed into the seventh vial, which is packed into the seventh trumpet, which is packed into the seventh seal.

The Apocalypse is structured in such a way that wherever anyone happens to live between the time of writing and the return of Jesus the book always reads as if the return is imminent. Apparently, during the time of Constantine in about AD 312, people recognised that the sixth seal had been broken and that the events of the seventh seal, the establishment of the kingdom of God on earth, were about to unfold.

Even although the seventh seal contains the seven trumpets, vials and thunders, there was no way of knowing in advance how long these events would take to occur. The lesson from the structure of the apocalypse is that we don't know how long it will take for the events to unfold and so we need to be ready at all times - and anyway, the return of Jesus cannot be further than a lifetime away for any of us.

In times of extreme tension in the Middle East (of which there have been many, for example 1967, 1973, 1981, 1991, 2011-13) we imagine the return to be imminent. If things are going badly for us in life we want the return right now, but if things are going well the kingdom can wait. The challenge laid down by the Apostle Paul is for us to try to be as ready as possible "For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." (2 Corinthians 6:2). Probably very few of us will be able to reach a state of complete and continual readiness for the return of Jesus, however we must at least keep trying.

On a personal note, I thought that the kingdom would have been established by the year 2000; I am now finishing off this book in 2015. The fact of the matter is that Jesus never was going to come back in 2000, or 2014 for that matter. However, the return of Jesus has not been delayed; there is a definite day (Acts 17:31). As I used to tell my children when they were little, God's got a ring round the date of the return of Jesus on his calendar in heaven.

The days of Noah and Lot

In Luke 17, Jesus informs us that the condition of the world just prior to his return would be similar in many respects to the world of Noah and Lot – Luke 17:26 “And as it was in the days of Noe, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of man.” Interestingly, Jesus does not warn us about the gross immorality and violence of the times of Noah and Lot. Instead, he cites the everyday, legitimate activities of life as being the main danger. The reason for this is that

everyday activities can dominate our life so much that we are not ready for the return of Jesus. We can summarise the words of Jesus in Luke 17 in one word – materialism!

In the days of Noah, just eight people were saved out of possibly several hundred million. What would have happened if Noah and his family had lived out their natural lives? Would another Noah have arisen that could have been saved? The inference is that the social and moral fabric of the pre-flood society had degenerated to such an extent that if Noah and his family had not been saved there would have been no righteous person left on the Earth!

If Noah and his family had not been saved, the only solution to the problem would have been the entire eradication of the human race. Likewise, if Jesus had not existed there would have been no escape from eternal oblivion for mankind. It is clear from Genesis 6 that God has set a certain standard of moral behaviour for mankind and whenever the line is crossed, God intervenes to correct the problem. This happened at the time of the Flood, and Sodom and Gomorrah, and is about to happen again in our time.

It is a chilling thought that we are now living in a world similar to the days of Noah and Lot. How has this situation arisen yet again? The problem is that each generation sets a lower moral example for the succeeding generation and so we are on a continuous downward spiral. This time, rather than sending a flood, God will send his son to the earth to rectify the problem.

Will Jesus return before or after Armageddon?

A question that is often asked is whether Jesus returns before or after the battle of Armageddon? The battle of Armageddon is the battle that will take place in Israel at about the same time as Jesus' return. The Bible indicates that the saints will be called away to the place of judgement *before* the battle of Armageddon, as we see in Revelation 16:15-16 "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame. And he gathered them into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon."

The same pattern is seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:1-3 "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape."

The implication of this verse is that there will be no obvious indication from world events that the return of Jesus is imminent. Rather, the opposite will be the case. There will be a measure of peace and security in the world when Jesus returns and so it will be unexpected.

In particular, it seems that 1 Thessalonians refers to peace in the Middle East. The key evidence is found in Ezekiel 38:8 "After many days thou shalt be visited: in the latter years thou shalt come into the land that is brought back from the sword, and is gathered out of many people, against the mountains of Israel, which have been always waste: but it is brought forth out of the

nations, and they shall dwell safely all of them.” This fact is repeated in verses 11 and 14 of the same chapter.

An interesting question is whether the peace mentioned in Ezekiel occurs *before* or *after* Armageddon? One viewpoint is that Israel is in a state of peace because Jesus has returned. However, the next chapter of Ezekiel makes it clear, strange though it may seem, that the period of peace occurs *before* Jesus’ return – Ezekiel 39:26 “After that they have borne their shame, and all their trespasses whereby they have trespassed against me, when they dwelt safely in their land, and none made them afraid.”

The Bible indicates that the saints who are still alive when Jesus returns, will be taken away to a place of safety before the battle of Armageddon - “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isaiah 26:20).

Another passage that indicates that the events that transpire in the Middle East prior to Armageddon will be unexpected is Joel 3:9 “Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; Prepare war, wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near; let them come up...” The fact that the mighty men of war need to be woken implies they were asleep – not literally asleep of course, but in the sense that war is unexpected.

The above is also consistent with Ezekiel 38:4 where God says of Russia “And I will turn thee back, and put hooks into thy jaws, and I will bring thee forth, and all thine army, horses and horsemen ...” The clear implication is that Russia and allies will be forced to invade Israel.

How will the saints be called away?

An intriguing question that arises from time to time is how the saints will be called away to meet Jesus. We don’t know for sure, but the weight of evidence seems to suggest we will be transported to the site of the judgment seat by an angel. This is suggested, for example, in Matthew 24:31 “And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of heaven to the other.” This trumpet is the same trumpet that calls the “dead in Christ” from their graves in 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

Another relevant verse is Hebrews 13:2 “Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.” Three cases of angels being “entertained unawares” spring to mind. Abraham entertained three angels prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, and two of those angels were entertained by Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. Gideon served food to an angel.

In the past, when people have been ‘taken away’, there has been very little time to prepare. For example, two angels grabbed Lot and his family to get them out of Sodom and Gomorrah before it was destroyed. Will the situation be similar when we are called away? If it is, we might only have a short time to grab a few belongings – maybe our Bible and a few clothes.

There may be no time to worry about the house - to shut the windows, switch off the hot water supply, empty the washing machine, hang the washing on the line.

The house keys, car keys, money and bank cards can all be left behind since they won't be needed again. Some of us might find this a challenge. I do. Maybe we'll think that we'd better take our keys, wallet and passport in case we are not accepted by Jesus and need to get back home. Whether or not we can leave behind our wallets might be a real test of faith. For the vast majority of those who are resurrected there will be absolutely nothing of their previous lives. Their houses, furniture, possessions have all completely disappeared, or in extremely rare cases are found in a museum somewhere in the world.

In Luke 17:34-37 Jesus indicates that people will be called away while engaging in three different activities – sleeping, grinding corn and working in the field. In Jesus' day, people reaped in the morning, threshed and ground ears of corn in the afternoon, and slept at night. This seems to suggest that the return will occur at a different time of day for different groups of people. But does this mean that groups of people will be called away at a different time of day within the same time zone, or called away simultaneously throughout the world which will be different times in different time zones? Let us explore further.

In the past, when people were called away, they were always called away together. For example, Israel came out of Egypt *together*, Noah and his family went into the ark *together*, Lot and his family were taken out of Sodom and Gomorrah *together*. In Matthew 24:31, a trumpet blast signals the moment when the angels go out to collect the saints, suggesting a precise moment in time. So, an intriguing question is how can we be called away at the same time if, according to Luke 17, we are called away at different times of the day?

The solution to this enigma is that if we are called away at the same time it will be at a different time of day depending on the time zone we are in. So, for example if we are called away at midnight Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) in London, it will be 7 pm on the east coast of the US, 10 am on the east coast of Australia, and midday in New Zealand.

This implies that the saints will be engaged in virtually all activities of life when called away. Some of us will be asleep in bed; some at work, school or college, driving, shopping etc. Some of us might even be doing an exam. (What a relief!). It is possible that the angel will arrive slightly ahead of time so we have time to prepare. For example, if we are driving along a highway, no doubt we will be given time to pull over rather than suddenly disappearing from the driver's seat leaving the car to crash!

In all cases cited above, Noah, Lot, the Exodus, there was a period of preparation. In the case of Noah, the animals were brought to the ark, which would have taken some time. Lot and his family were visited by the angels the night before the destruction. The children of Israel prepared for the exodus the night before. We have already seen that Hebrews 13:2 suggests that one day we might entertain angels – maybe these will be the angels sent to bring us to the

judgment seat. If they are, and we are to entertain them, it suggests a preparation period of at least a few hours.

Another interesting question is whether the disappearance of the saints will be noticed by the world at large. It is possible that phone companies will wonder why several thousand people stopped receiving and making phone calls at the same time. Some people familiar with Bible teaching might conceivably make a connection with the return of Jesus. However, it is quite likely that the disappearance will go unnoticed – after all, thousands of people go missing all over the world each day for various reasons.

An interesting question is whether there will be mobile coverage at the place of judgement? Will people be able to send a text or post a message on Facebook? We don't know but I suspect not. When the time comes, most of us will need a period of psychological adjustment. Normally when we travel to the other side of the world we have a minimum of a few days warning. None of us have ever experienced arriving in a foreign country within a few minutes of stepping out of the shower.

However long the preparation period, we can be certain that it will be far too short to sort out our lives - the time for that is now. The parable of the wise and foolish virgins suggests that some may try to sort out their lives during the limited preparation period before actually arriving at the judgment seat, but it will be too late.

Another question often asked is how will the saints get to the place of judgment? We don't know for sure but it could be exactly the same way that Philip was transported from Gaza to Azotus. In this case, Philip was walking along and was suddenly transported to a town about 50 km away. In Acts 8:39 the account reads "...the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing. But Philip was found at Azotus..." The Greek word translated as "caught away" in Acts 8:39 is *harpazo*, which means "to snatch away". Exactly the same word is translated as "caught up" in 1 Thessalonians 4:17 "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord". This verse refers to the gathering of the true believers to Jesus when he returns to the earth.

The location of the judgement seat

We don't know for sure where the judgment seat will be. However, there are indications that it will be located somewhere in the region of the Sinai Peninsula. This makes sense as it was the location where the Israelites were judged when they came out of Egypt on their way to the Promised Land. A text that suggests Sinai will be the place of judgment is Deuteronomy 33:1-2 "And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words."

A particular point to notice here is that Moses pronounced a blessing on Israel *before* he died. This was a common practice at this time, another example is Jacob's blessing of his sons in Genesis 49. At face value, it may appear that Moses' blessing of Israel could only refer to Israel as they journeyed to the Promised Land. It is true that God *did* go before his people when they travelled from Sinai to the Promised Land in the pillar of cloud.

However, can the word "saints" be applied to Israel who entered the Promised Land under Joshua? In view of the rebelliousness of Israel in the wilderness it could hardly be said of Israel "every one shall receive of thy words." And what about the fiery law? These words are better applied to the future when the saints – each one a manifestation of God's wonderful character – travel with Jesus from Sinai to Israel to liberate the Jews from the occupying armies.

The second of the three primary references suggesting Sinai as the place of judgement is Psalm 68:17 "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place." What are 20,000 angels doing at Sinai? We need to analyse this verse a bit further to ascertain the true meaning. The Hebrew word translated as *chariot* in Psalm 68:17 is *rekeb* (7393). Strong says that *rekeb* means *vehicle* and is derived from *rakab* (7392), which means *to ride*. Therefore it seems that *chariot* is a reasonable translation of *rekeb*.

The Hebrew word translated as *angel* in Psalm 68:17 is *shinan* (8136), which means *change* and is derived from *shana* (8132), meaning *to alter or change*. This is quite different from the regular word for angel, which is the Hebrew word *malak* (4397). Psalm 68:17 is the only place where a word derived from *shana* is translated as angel, in all other places it is translated as alter or change. So why did the translators translate this word as *angels*?

The context clearly indicates that these entities belong to God, and so a guess was made that since the angels belong to God, and are conveyors of messages, then maybe these changed ones are also angels. This isn't far off the mark as the changed ones spoken of here can be considered to be the angels of the future age. This is supported by Hebrews 2:5 "For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak." The saints will be the angels of the kingdom of God.

The most reasonable explanation of Psalm 68:17 would seem to be that the "changed ones" are the saints who have been changed from mortal to immortal at the judgment seat of Christ. This is in keeping with 1 Corinthians 15:51,52 "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed."

The context of Psalm 68 is the establishment of the kingdom, which can be verified from Psalm 68:21 "But God shall wound the head [Heb. *ros*] of his enemies..." Since the word for head here is the Hebrew *ros* (the regular word for head in the Hebrew language) we have a clear connection with Ezekiel 38 and the battle of Armageddon when God wounds the head of the enemies of Israel.

Another allied passage is Habakkuk 3:3 “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.” This is similar to Deuteronomy 33:1-2. The whole context of Habakkuk 3 is the pouring out of God’s judgments to establish the kingdom. For example, we have a description of the battle of Armageddon in Habakkuk 3:12 “Thou didst march through the land in indignation, thou didst thresh the heathen in anger.”

Arriving at the judgement seat

Imagine the intense excitement, no doubt tinged with fear, of being called away to the judgement seat. Suppose this was to happen right now, how would we feel? Would we think, "No, not now! If only I had a bit more time I would have been ready!" If this is how we feel, now is the time to do something about it as tomorrow may be too late (2 Corinthians 6:2). Probably all of us will wish that we could turn back the clock on some aspects of our lives when we arrive at the judgement seat.

As an exercise, let's try and project ourselves forward to the judgement seat in our mind's eye. Just suppose for the moment that we're rejected. This is a horrible thought. However, since we are only imagining this we can 'come back' and have a second chance. How would we do things differently? Although no mortal being at the judgement seat will be perfect, God does ask us to try and move in the right direction: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

The Bible is a guide on how to improve ourselves, how to become more like God himself. It is actually possible in a small way to put our own selves through the judgement seat in advance - John 12:48 “He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.” In the end, everyone will be dependent on the mercy of God, “For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God;” (Romans 3:23). David, a man after God’s own heart, failed dramatically, but he repented of his sins and God forgave him and we know for certain he is going to be in the kingdom.

Of course, none of us can become Godly through our own will-power. That is a sure way to fail. We have to put our trust in God that he is able to mould our characters through the operation of the Word of God, the ministration of the angels – and we have to keep in touch with God via prayer throughout the transformation process.

The resurrection of the dead

Sometime before the living saints are taken away to the judgement seat of Christ, the dead saints will be resurrected. It has been suggested that resurrected saints will be used by God to announce the return of Jesus to living relatives. If this is the case there will certainly be no doubt that Jesus has arrived. One problem with this scenario is that not all saints will have a resurrected relative. Either way, we have no choice about whether or not we are going to be called away. If God has deemed that we’re going to be there then we’re going to be there.

An interesting question is how old resurrected saints will appear. One possibility is that saints will be raised at the same age as when they died. The only examples that we have of resurrections in the Bible are of people that had recently died, e.g. the widow's son in the OT and Lazarus in the NT. When Jesus himself was raised from the dead, a number of people who had recently died were raised and went into Jerusalem to show themselves to their relatives.

Another issue is how the dead are going to be clothed. We don't often worry about details, however, in my opinion thinking about what might be considered to be mundane aspects of Jesus' return helps to make the return more real. A few days after my mother-in-law died, my youngest daughter who was five at the time, was worried that if Granny's clothes were taken away she would have nothing to wear at the resurrection. In her mind there was absolutely no doubt that Jesus was going to come back to raise her Granny.

No doubt, at the resurrection clothes will be provided by the angels, probably the same type of clothes that people wore in their time. Abraham would not be comfortable in a suit and tie and someone from our own era would not be comfortable in a robe such as that worn by Abraham.

The purpose of the judgment seat

What is the purpose of the judgement seat? We might view the judgement seat as an exam - an exam for which we are woefully unprepared. A positive way of looking at the judgement seat is that it will be the final perfecting of our character. At the present time we are being shaped by the 'divine chisel'. The blocks used in the construction of Solomon's temple were shaped in a quarry offsite and then assembled at the temple site. The lesson here is that the fundamental shaping of our character is taking place now – Ephesians 2:10: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

A key passage in relation to the judgment seat is Malachi 3:16-17 "Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." These people are clearly meeting regularly to discuss God and his purpose.

If we are worried, great comfort is found in the words of 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." If we come to God in prayer and confess our sins and endeavour to move forward then God will forgive us. We might think that these words only apply to 'small' sins and not 'big' ones. This verse is telling us that if we confess our sins in the right spirit then it is certain that God will forgive us – unlike human beings, God is "faithful and just".

Human beings have a problem with forgiveness as indicated by Jesus emphasis on this point – for example forgiving someone seventy times seven, which in the context of everyday life

means an infinite number of times. Jesus did not mean that if someone offends you for the 491 time it's OK not to forgive them.

The importance of this situation is underlined by the fact that God's forgiveness of us is underlined by the Lord's Prayer "forgive us as we forgive others". There is a need for us to pray for those who have a forgiveness problem.

Sometimes we make the mistake that some sins are so bad that they are unforgiveable. This is apart from blasphemy of the Holy Spirit that could occur in the first century when people had the Holy Spirit gifts. Conversely we might think that some sins committed against us are so bad that God does not expect us to forgive the perpetrator.

The problem is that God's way is in opposition to the thinking of man. Human thinking is that people who have offended us must be punished – it's our *right* that they should be punished – hence the highly litigious society of many parts of the Developed World. From the human perspective – if we forgive someone for offending us we are rewarding them for their behaviour! This is not God's way, neither should it be ours.

The irony is that we might actually generate our very own unforgiveable sin – in other word God cannot forgive us because we cannot forgive someone else! However, this is not an unforgiveable sin in the sense that blasphemy against the Holy Spirit was in the first century, since as soon as we let go of our forgiveness, God reciprocates.

In situations that appear to be unresolvable this side of the kingdom we often wonder how two people are going to get on in the kingdom. Grudges are not going to pass through into the kingdom. It is obvious that in the immortal state the situation where two saints "aren't talking to each other" cannot arise. We are not going to hear someone say "I haven't spoken to so-and-so for a million years after our last bust up!" Another part of the Lord's prayer – "thy will be on Earth as it is in heaven". Conflicts occur on the Earth not in heaven.

It is a comforting thought that God's capacity to forgive and show mercy is very great, as revealed in Psalm 103:10-12 "He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewardeth us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

I have thought quite a lot about this issue of the process of rapprochement at the judgement seat between individuals who were unable to resolve their differences prior to the judgement seat. A case in point is Paul and Barnabas who parted as the contention between them was so great (Acts 15:39). We have no record of them resolving their difference before the end of their lives and so their differences will have to be sorted out at the judgement seat.

These conflict issues must be resolved before the change to immortality, and in some cases whether someone enters eternal life may depend on their last chance of forgiving someone at

the judgement seat. I really hope that I am wrong, but it is possible that some may prefer eternal death rather than patching up with someone and entering eternal life. The way I have thought about it is that it is like childhood tiffs that are forgotten in adulthood. We are now in a spiritual childhood and hope to become fully fledged sons and daughters of God.

Images taken with the latest telescopes have shown just how high the heavens are above the earth. It is now known that the full extent of the universe is beyond the reach of any telescope. In other words God's mercy is immeasurable! How far away is the east from the west? It is possible to travel eastwards around the world for ever and never arrive at the west! In other words God will place an immeasurably great distance between us and our transgressions.

God makes it clear that he really wants us to be in his kingdom – “Fear not, little flock; for it is your father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). If we really want to be in the kingdom and are trying our best to get there God will make sure we get there. Hypothetically, if someone were to make it their life's ambition to stop us getting to the kingdom, God would stop them from stopping us.

The Apostle Paul, says that if we are fully committed to being in the kingdom it will be impossible for us not to be there – “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:38-39).

However, in spite of this there is one person who can stop us being in the kingdom – us! God will never remove his love from us, but we can remove our love from his. Although we are bound to be fearful at the judgement seat we need to bear in mind that “perfect love casteth out fear”.

There will be obstacles in our life, but there is no obstacle too large that cannot be overcome through faith – the apostle Paul said “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Philippians 4:13). When Israel stood on the borders of the Promised Land and had just received the report of the 12 spies, the taking of the land seemed impossible from a natural point of view. However, with God's help they were able to conquer the land. Through faith it is possible to overcome all obstacles and echo the words of Caleb: “And Caleb stilled the people before Moses, and said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it” (Numbers 13:30).

What will it be like to be made immortal?

An interesting question is what age we will appear when we are immortalised. Will we look the same age as when we died, or when called away to the judgment seat? If we were old, will we be raised young? Various scriptures suggest that immortal beings look young. For example, when the two Mary's arrive at the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus, they saw a young man sitting inside the tomb who was clearly an angel: Mark 16:5 “And entering into the sepulchre, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, clothed in a long white garment...”

Another strong indication that angels look young is in Genesis 1:26: “And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness...” We are told that Adam and Eve were created in the physical and moral image of God. If the angels looked old, then we might expect Adam and Eve to have also appeared old. However, the effects of aging are the consequence of the original sin of Adam and Eve – part of the process of dying spoken of in Genesis 2:17: “...thou shalt surely die...” or “dying thou shalt die” in the Hebrew.

Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden for an unknown amount of time before they were ejected. During this time they had not sinned and therefore had not started to die, i.e. to physically decay. It does not seem appropriate that immortalised beings should carry with them the physical marks of the decay process that results in death.

If we all appear to be the same age in the immortalised state – say between 20 and 30 - our relationship between each other is going to be quite different from now. We tend to feel more comfortable with, and understand better, people of our own generation. In the kingdom we’re all going to be young again. If you are like me, you probably picture Abraham as being an old man with white hair and a long white beard. It may come as a shock to us to see Abraham as a 25 year old with dark hair. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob will probably look far more like brothers than father, son and grandson. Our facial expressions will probably be different from when we were 25 since the majority will have more than 25 years’ experience of life.

The change from mortal to immortal will be the most incredible experience, and we really can’t imagine what it will be like since it is beyond our experience. However, those of us who are older are in a better position to imagine what it will be like. Maybe to a first approximation, the process of being immortalised will be like becoming young again – perfect vision and hearing, with no more aches and pains.

As we get older time seems to go faster. This effect is real since as we get older our metabolic processes slow down – the time between the ‘ticks’ of our metabolic clock increase. There are fewer ticks per unit time and therefore time seems to run faster. It is probable that when we are immortalised, we will experience time similarly to when we were a young person – or maybe even slower. This means that 1,000 years in the immortal state will be perceived as being much longer than 1,000 years in the mortal state.

In the immortal state we will almost certainly have perfect memories – extremely useful for remembering all those names in the kingdom. Today we have many aids to memory – especially photographs and videos. We can look at the photographs taken of a holiday long ago and in some small way re-live the experience. Photographs and videos are a way of preserving the past. Imagine having perfect recall of an event – it would be like going back in time.

The change from mortal to immortal will occur in an instant – “Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we

shall be changed.” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). An eye blink is the fastest event we experience as human beings. The change from mortality to immortality must be fast by definition. It does not make sense for our body below the neck to be mortal and our head immortal. In one instant we will be mortal, and in the next immortal.

In the immortal state we will have a completely different viewpoint on accidents. At the moment, although we don't like to think about it, at any moment our lives could be prematurely cut short by accident, a car crash, for example. We all know someone who has been killed in a car or motorbike accident. In the immortal state the possibility of death by accident will simply not exist.

The marriage supper of the lamb

This heading is taken from Revelation 19:9 “And he saith unto me, Write, Blessed are they that are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb.” Although the book of Revelation is symbolic there are a number of verses that make it clear that there will be a literal feast that takes place at the commencement of the kingdom after the completion of the judgement seat. Jesus spoke about this future feast in the upper room.

Imagine the incredible feeling of sitting down with fellow saints at this feast – all the worries of this present time, family, marriage, financial, health, work etc. will be completely gone. We might want to think back to these problems just for the enjoyment of contemplating their complete disappearance! And we are destined to live forever without these problems.

Our attitude to time in the immortal state will be completely different from now. Today, we constantly worry or complain about not having enough time. If someone is being a bit slow we sometimes get frustrated and say “come on, I haven't got all day!” We might plan to do something in a few years – e.g. visit another country, or we might have plans for our retirement even although we know deep down here is a chance we will not be around. In the immortal state, we *will* have all day and will never have to worry about running out of time. The amount of time we have is infinite – literally!

Resurrection of children

An emotive topic is whether the children of saints who died before they reached the age of responsibility (i.e. were not old enough to understand the gospel and be baptised) will be resurrected. Although this is a controversial topic I think it is worth discussing. The traditional view has been that children will not be raised from the dead, and that although we find this difficult to accept in the mortal state, in the immortal state we will be able to cope with the loss.

Many of us talk to our children about the kingdom and are overjoyed when they tell us that they really want to be there. What do we tell them if they ask us what will happen if they die before Jesus returns? Just imagine their disappointment if we told them that if they die before they are baptised they have no hope – they're going to be dead forever.

We certainly wouldn't want to tell a child this if the child knew they were dying. We sometimes hear the argument that a child is allowed to die because God knows that the child is not going to come into the truth. If this were the case it is difficult to explain why not all children are baptised when they reach adulthood.

In scripture we have two examples of children being raised. One is the raising of the son of the Shunammite woman by Elisha (2 Kings 4:18-37) and the other the raising of Jairus' daughter by Jesus (Matthew 9:18-26; Mark 5:22-43, Luke 8:41-56). In each case, one of the parents makes a specific request for the raising of their child.

Note the symmetry of these two examples, one in the OT and the other the NT. In one case the mother asks for the child to be raised and in the other the father. A boy is raised by Elisha, a girl by Jesus. An interesting point is that if children are raised at the beginning of the kingdom, and resurrected adults look between 20 and 30, as discussed above, then in most cases parents will look about the same age as when their child died.

Whatever our view on this issue, the fact of the matter is we have two actual examples of children being raised from the dead at the request of their parents. In the examples cited above, the two children were raised as mortal beings and therefore would have lived out the remainder of their lives as adults. Children raised in the kingdom will become part of the mortal population and be subject to the second judgment at the end of the kingdom.

We know from history that in the Roman Empire some of the saints and their children were thrown to the lions. This period of persecution occurred at the hands of the Roman Emperor Trajan in the period AD 110–120, incidentally as prophesied in Revelation 2:10. It is difficult to believe that children thrown to the lions will not be raised with their parents, or at least at their parents' request.

An objection might be that children cannot be resurrected since they are not responsible for judgment. However, the resurrection we are talking about occurs *after* the resurrection of the saints and after the 'resurrection' from mortality to immortality. It will be on the basis of the immortal parents making a request to Jesus, their elder brother, for their child or children to be raised, in exactly the same way that the Shunammite woman and Jairus did.

Another concern might be that this view comes under the category of a doctrine to be rejected. In the Birmingham Amended Statement of Faith (BASF), in the list of doctrines to be rejected, number 22 reads: "*That 'heathens', idiots, pagans and very young children will be saved*". However, children resurrected at the request of immortal parents will not be *saved* – they will be mortals in the kingdom who have the hope of being given eternal life at the end of the Millennium. Therefore, the view that children will be resurrected at the request of their parents does not conflict with the statement of faith.

It would seem reasonable that resurrected children will live in Israel alongside the children of saints alive at the return. However, by the time the kingdom is fully established, children who

were alive at the return, or who were resurrected later, will have become adults and may have children of their own.

Another point relevant to this discussion is the scriptural principle of the salvation of a house. For example, we read in Hebrews 11:7 “By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house...” Rahab is another case in point – all of Rahab’s family in the house when the walls of Jericho collapsed were saved. There are precedents for a whole household being saved on the basis of the faith of one person.

Another passage of scripture relevant to the current discussion is the account of the raising of Dorcas by Peter (Acts 9:36-41). Although Dorcas clearly was not a child, this is another example of a mortal person, Peter, asking God to raise the dead. Therefore, in the kingdom, as immortal sons and daughters of the living God we will certainly be in a position to ask God to raise a child.

Jesus’ anticipation of his return

Imagine what it will be like for Jesus to return to the earth after an absence of about 2,000 years. In our own experience, when we go back to a place where we lived several years before it is usually an emotive experience. Just imagine how Jesus will feel coming back to the Israel – to Jerusalem, Bethany, Nazareth, Bethlehem etc.

We might imagine that since we are told in Revelation 1:13 that Jesus walked amongst the seven churches/ecclesias of Asia Minor, he can come to the Earth whenever he wants, for example, to be amongst saints at the breaking of bread. (Matthew 18:20). Although we cannot presume to know exactly how Jesus views the earth, we can be certain it is not the same as actually being here. Have you ever looked at photos or Google Earth of a place before you’ve been there and the reality seemed quite different? Hebrews 9:28 makes it clear that when Jesus comes back it will be the *second* time – not the third, fourth, fifth etc.

As well as anticipating revisiting physical locations, Jesus will of course mainly be looking forward to meeting his friends from the past – Mary Magdalene, Martha, Lazareth, the 12 disciples. Just imagine the intensity of feeling when Jesus meets his friends once again! No doubt, Jesus’ recalls his time on Earth 2,000 years ago and looks forward with eager anticipation to meeting his new disciples. Of course Jesus can find out all he wants to know about us now, but that will not be the same as meeting us face to face.

Will there be a sign in heaven of Jesus’ return?

An interesting question is whether there will be a physical sign in the sky that Jesus is back on the earth – in other words a modern day version of the Star of Bethlehem. At the moment of Jesus’ birth, the only people who knew were shepherds told directly by the angels. At that time the world was unaware of the birth of Jesus. It seems that the Star of Bethlehem, whatever celestial phenomena it was, could be seen all over the Middle East.

It is possible that a star will appear in the sky after the saints have been called away. This could be how “every eye shall see him”. This could be the “sign in heaven” referred to in the Olivet Prophecy – Matthew 24:30 “And then shall appear the sign of the son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see...”

Practical exhortation

Are we ready for the return of Jesus? I have to admit that most of the time I am not. On numerous occasions my thoughts are dominated by topics not directly related to the return of Jesus, for example work. We are all similar but have different interests. Maybe one way of getting things into perspective is to look at the interests of others and assess how important they are to us. Probably not very important. Conversely, our interests probably don't seem that important to others.

Several years ago I heard a program on the BBC in the UK that explored the lives of a group of fanatical bird watchers through the eyes of their wives. The bird watches carried beepers (this was before mobile phones) and when they heard a report of a bird on the other side of the country they would drop everything and travel to the location of the sighting. Of course, sometimes the bird had flown and all the effort was in vain.

On one occasion a group of bird watchers left a wedding to see a bird and arrived back several hours later during the reception! These men (no women were mentioned) were ready to leave at any moment to see a bird. The lesson of course is that we should be ready to leave at a moments' notice for something far more important.

How do we deal with excessive interest that gets in the way of our relationship with God? From personal experience I find that this problem can be mitigated to some extent by taking time out to focus on another area of interest, not necessarily related to the truth, which prevents the bond becoming too strong in one direction. Sometimes cold turkey may be the best course of action, i.e. just say to ourselves, enough is enough – we're getting in too deep and it's time to back off.

3. The establishment of the kingdom

Having looked at the return of Jesus we now turn to the establishment of the kingdom and look at what needs to happen to transform the world from of today into the world of the kingdom. Clearly this is not going to happen overnight.

The return of Jesus to the Mount of Olives

When Jesus returns to the earth, the first point of contact will be the Mt. of Olives. As well as being a literal act, the touching will also be symbolic. In Daniel 2, we have an account of a dream that Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon had one night. Nebuchadnezzar dreamed of a giant statue with a head of gold, arms of silver, a belly and things of brass belly, legs of iron and feet a mixture of iron and clay.

The golden head of the image represents Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian empire and the other sections represent seceding empires. The feet of iron and clay represent the world just prior to Jesus' return. Jesus is the stone "cut out without hands" that hits Nebuchadnezzar's image on the feet as described in Daniel 2. Jesus arrival on the Mount of Olives will also symbolise the earth becoming God's footstool in the kingdom, and point forward to the time when God's literal feet will touch the earth at the end of the kingdom.

When the Mount of Olives splits in two, a devastating earthquake will occur that will have dramatic effects far beyond the borders of Israel. This will cause the topography, or the geographical layout of the land of Israel, to be permanently changed, which we will look at later.

The moment Jesus' feet touch the Mount of Olives, he becomes directly visible to the world, even although he may have been on earth for several years before. If we had to choose a moment that would be the 'official' start of the kingdom this would probably be it.

Just for the moment, imagine how agnostics and atheists will respond to news of the return of Jesus to the Earth. Some people may disbelieve the reports and look for some kind of natural cause for the Mt. of Olives splitting in two and subsequent earthquake. Some may think that the initial news reports are fake, but eventually will be forced to come to the realisation that an historic figure called Jesus Christ really is here on the Earth. Some people will be overjoyed, some deeply concerned when they consider the implications for their life style.

In scripture we have a number of places where the establishment of the kingdom is described in symbolic fashion; for example Abraham fighting against Tidal king of nations, David's seven military campaigns against the nations surrounding Israel followed by Solomon's reign of peace, Cyrus' conquest of Babylon etc. We also have a number of prophecies that deal with the establishment of the kingdom.

Let us examine Daniel 2 in more detail and learn a bit more about the process of the establishment of the kingdom. There appears to be three-stages. In the first stage, the stone smashes the feet, and the image is unable to stand and collapses under the force of gravity, shattering into hundreds of fragments on hitting the ground. In the second stage the stone actively grinds the fragments to a powder, which is blown away by the wind leaving no trace of the image. In the third stage the stone expands to fill the earth.

The hitting of the image on the feet corresponds to the arrival of Jesus and the saints on the Mount of Olives. The grinding of the image fragments corresponds to the demolition of the governments of the world. The expansion of the stone is the establishment of the divine government across the globe.

The collapse of civilisation

While the saints are at the judgment seat, dramatic events will be taking place in the Middle East. Russia and allies will have invaded Israel and the battle of Armageddon will be imminent. When the saints are taken away to the judgment seat, what light was in the world will have gone, and gross darkness will descend, as foretold in Isaiah 60:1-2 “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.”

This verse means that when Jesus’ disciples, described as “the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14), are taken away the world becomes spiritually dark. Isaiah says that God’s people being taken to a place of safety while civilisation as we know it collapses: “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isaiah 26:20).

It is clear from Luke’s account of the Olivet Prophecy that the world will be in deep trouble just before the return of Jesus – “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory” (Luke 21:25-27).

The following is a summary of the likely chain of events that will result in the collapse of civilisation as we know it. First, an alliance of nations called the *King of the North* in the Bible, will invade the Middle East by sweeping from the north of Israel down through the coastal plain of Israel (the Shaphelah) and on into Egypt (Daniel 11:40-45). We are told that another alliance called the *King of the South* will unsuccessfully attempt to stop this invasion. A key question is who are the kings of the north and south?

Having reached Egypt, the King of the North hears strange news from a north easterly direction (Daniel 11:44) and is compelled, like a fish caught on a hook (Ezekiel 38:4) to return to Israel. In Ezekiel 38 we are told that the lead nation in the northern alliance will be Russia –

amazingly the ancient name for Russia (Ross) is found in this chapter even though it was written about 2,500 years ago. On Russian stamps, Russia is spelt РОСС in the Cyrillic script. (Google “Russian stamps” to verify this). The southern group of nations is a British-American alliance.

Meanwhile Christ and the saints leave Sinai and visit the Arabs in the trans-Jordan region to get them to prepare food and accommodation for the Jews who will escape from Jerusalem during the battle of Armageddon. Jesus, the saints, and accompanying angels, arrive above the Mount of Olives as war rages around Jerusalem. The city is smothered by dense black smoke generated by the conflict. Jesus is the first to land on the Mount of Olives and as his feet touch the ground, a thunderous roar shakes the whole region. A crack appears beneath his feet, rapidly widening into a deep chasm.

As this is happening, buildings across the entire city of Jerusalem begin to collapse. The eastern wall of the temple mount crumbles and collapses into the Kidron Valley in a torrent of rubble and dust. Since Mount Zion is geologically separate from the surrounding bedrock, the chasm created by the splitting of the Mount of Olives reaches only as far as Mount Zion. People run along the bottom of the chasm heading eastwards from the city. This valley will be the escape route for Jews holed up in Jerusalem.

An account of this event is described in Zachariah 14:4-5 “And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.”

The Jews escaping along the east-west valley created by the splitting of the Mount of Olives are somehow able to cross the River Jordan into the ancient territory of Ammon (part of Jordan today) where they turn right and travel down the River Arnon, which is the border between Ammon and Moab. Here they are met by Moabites, or modern Arabs who live in the former territory of Moab which today is part of Jordan.

Here the escapees find refuge – Isaiah 16:3,4 “Take counsel, execute judgement; make thy shadow as the night in the midst of the noonday; hide the outcasts; bewray not him that wandereth. Let my outcasts dwell with thee Moab; be thou a covert to them from the face of the spoiler; for the extortioner is at an end, the spoiler ceaseth, the oppressors are consumed out of the land.”

The escapees then travel further east – Isaiah 21:13-15 “The burden upon Arabia. In the forest in Arabia shall ye lodge, O ye travelling companies of Dedanim. The inhabitants of the land of Tema brought water to him that was thirsty, they prevented with their bread him that fled. For

they fled from the swords, from the drawn sword, and from the bent bow, and from the grievousness of war.”

While the Jews flee, the King of the North arrives from Egypt. The reason Russia comes from Egypt to Israel is because they have heard of this mysterious force coming from the east and so decide to investigate and, if necessary, confront. The King of the North camps between the Mediterranean Sea and Jerusalem in readiness – Daniel 11:44-45 “But tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many. And he shall plant the tabernacles of his palace between the seas in the glorious holy mountain; yet he shall come to his end, and none shall help him.”

A graphic and gruesome picture of the final end of the King of the North is painted in Joel 2:20 “And I will remove far off from you the northern army, and will drive him into a land barren and desolate, with his face toward the east sea, and his hinder part toward the utmost sea, and his stink shall come up, because he hath done great things.” Here we have a picture of a vast army heading for Jerusalem, which is destroyed before arriving.

The third earthquake of the Apocalypse

The great earthquake caused by the splitting of the Mount of Olives is referred to symbolically in the book of Revelation, or *Apocalypse*, as a political earthquake. Three political earthquakes are referred to in the Apocalypse. The first describes the transition from paganism to nominal Christianity in the Roman Empire at the beginning of the reign of the emperor Constantine in c.312 BC (Revelation 6:12). The second refers to the French Revolution of 1789 (Revelation 11:13), and the third is the fall of the kingdom of men and rise of the kingdom of God.

The actual splitting of the Mount of Olives will itself be a gigantic geological event. Historically, no earthquake has ever been known to split a mountain. Most earthquakes are associated with fault line movements of only a few meters and, contrary to popular belief do not produce cracks wide and deep enough to swallow buildings. In an earthquake, the majority of the damage is caused by wavelike motion of the ground, the height of the waves define the Richter scale. In this case, the fact that a mountain will actually split and the two halves move several km suggests an earthquake way off the Richter scale.

It is possible that the splitting of the Mount of Olives will be captured by news organisations (e.g. CNN) and beamed all over the world in real time – in a similar manner to the attack on the World Trade Centre in September 11, 2001. Just imagine the comments that will be made on the news channels as images appear of the two halves of the Mount of Olives moving off in opposite directions! Whether or not this will be witnessed worldwide depends on how long the global telecommunications networks remain intact.

Since all the worlds’ fault lines are connected, the splitting of the Mount of Olives will have a knock on effect around the world. Earthquakes often cause aftershocks, for example, in 1993 an earthquake in Landers, California triggered several secondary earthquakes as far away as Montana over a 24-hour period.

It is highly likely that the earthquake triggered by the splitting of the Mount of Olives will trigger undersea earthquakes generating tsunamis, as occurred for example on the 26 December 2004 off the Indonesian coast, which caused the death of at least 200,000 people. Several thousand people were killed in the 2011 Japanese tsunami and in 2013 there were serious concerns about continuing radioactive leaks from the Fukushima nuclear power station.

Passages in Isaiah indicate that the after effects of the Great Earthquake will be worldwide – Isaiah 2:19 “And they shall go into the holes of the rocks, and into the caves of the earth, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth”, and Isaiah 24:19-20 “The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage...”

Another consequence of extensive earthquake activity around the world will be the disruption of optical fibre communication networks. This occurred in December 2006 when a magnitude 6.7 earthquake near the town of Hengchun in Taiwan damaged several undersea optical fibre cables between Taiwan and China.

As a consequence, Taiwan lost almost all of its telephone and internet capacity between Japan and mainland China and 60% of services to the US. At the time it was estimated it would take a few weeks to fix the cables. However, in the future, with such widespread destruction after the splitting of the Mount of Olives the resources will not be available to repair damage to electrical, gas and water utilities.

Gas stations will run out of fuel and trucks won't be able to deliver food to shops. Earthquakes have a devastating effect on all levels of society, on the poor as well as the rich. However, it is probable that the effects will be far worse in the Developed World than the Developing World where people are used to being without electricity, water and phones etc.

I had an interesting experience in 1987 that caused me to think about the effect the return of Jesus will have on various parts of the world. I visited a fellow Christadelphian, Miguel Salazer in Acapulco, Mexico. Although Miguel's house was just a concrete shell, it was the best house in the suburb, which to the western eye looked like a refugee camp. Miguel was a professor of Indian languages (he could speak at least 100) at the main university in the city. During my visit Miguel and I went to visit one of his relatives in a village about 160 km from Acapulco.

The family lived in a single roomed house with no water, no toilet (apart from a dark patch of earth in the corner of the garden) and no electricity. After visiting Mexico I returned to Huston, Texas and discussed my experience with a family with whom I was staying. I suggested that when Jesus returns, the so-called third world will not be affected to the same extent as the first world since they cannot fall much further. Subsequent to the return of Jesus the whole world will be brought down to the same level.

Just how easily the world order could collapse is underlined by the power blackouts that occurred in the American northeast in August 2003. It seems that the power grid in this area of the US has been close to breaking point for some time – especially over the summer period when extra power is required for air conditioning. 50 million people suddenly found themselves with no electricity.

In the very early stages of the problem, it was assumed by some that such a catastrophic power failure must surely have been an act of terrorism. It transpired that the collapse of the power system needed no outside help. After several weeks of investigation it was discovered that tree roots in just one part of the grid caused a chain reaction causing a very large area of the north-eastern United States to be blacked out in a period of just nine seconds. It is not difficult to see how major earthquake activity, such as that which will occur after the Great Earthquake, could cut underground power cables and bring down overhead power lines across the entire world.

Probably the closest that we can get to seeing what conditions will be like in the world after the return of Jesus is the events which happened after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. Events such as these bring out the worst but also the best in people. There was a breakdown of law and order; commentators spoke about ‘urban warfare’ with marauding gangs of armed looters. However, as looters rampaged through the city, people outside of the stricken areas were opening their houses to complete strangers.

After hurricane Katrina, people were surprised and shocked to see how fast civilisation collapsed in New Orleans. And this collapse occurred in a localised area while the rest of America, the richest country in the world with enormous resources, remained intact.

It is likely that a similar situation will occur in the aftermath of Armageddon, except on a global scale. The breakdown of society prior to the establishment of the kingdom will also bring out the best and worst in people, and may have a filtering effect on society to separate those who will make good citizens of the kingdom of God and those who will not. No doubt many saints will be involved in organising relief efforts on a scale never seen before, or even imagined, to get food and medicines to the many devastated places of the world.

Imagine arriving at a country where people are in desperate circumstances, they have no food, water, shelter or clothing. Many of them are ill and many have lost family members. From their perspective they have no hope and many of them may just wish they were dead. How do we help them? The aftermath of Armageddon will be the greatest humanitarian disaster that the world has ever faced and is described in Daniel 12 as “a time of trouble such as never was”.

However, the saints, energised by the power of God will be on hand to assist. All the saints will be energised by God’s power, the Holy Spirit, which will be used to assist people. We will have to identify as many sources of food around the world and get them to where they are most needed, and organise the planting of seeds as soon as possible. In extreme cases it might be necessary for small amounts food to be multiplied miraculously as occurred for example when Jesus fed the 5,000.

Whatever happens, the present organisation of the world, collectively called the *kingdom of men* by Daniel, will be destroyed in order to lay the foundation of the kingdom of God. The sheer scale of the devastation is described in Isaiah 24:19 “The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly.” There are many situations where it is easier to demolish an old building and start again rather than repair it. It is clear from the language of scripture that this approach will be taken in the establishment of the kingdom.

Removal of entertainment media

In many ways the technology of the modern world is going to make the job of the saints in establishing the kingdom easier. Without electrical power, DVDs, BluRay discs, iPods, iPads, iPhones, iWatches, computers, and the internet will all be useless. When the internet goes down, all immoral material will be destroyed far more efficiently than destroying hard copies. It will make the job of teaching the Gospel to the mortal population of the world a lot easier – there will be no conspiracy theories to compete with.

Collapse of the world’s financial systems

Another effect of the Great Earthquake will be the collapse of the world’s financial systems, implied by Isaiah 2:20 “In that day a man shall cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.” Although this may have an application to actual idols made of gold and silver, these words are also applicable to stocks and shares and other financial instruments designed to make money. It is quite clear from this verse that money and equivalent financial instruments will be valueless post Armageddon.

I don’t understand money and economics but I am indebted to Hayden Smith in explaining that the current economic order is unsustainable and ultimately is headed for a crash. The problem is that interest is used to generate money.

The language is clearly allegorical, although of course it is possible that in sheer frustration people will throw money away, which might be used by animals in some way – for example to make a nest. The vast majority of money in the world today exists in electronic form, so when computers and the internet go down, money will also disappear. If there are no hard copies of what is stored on computers and associated electronic backup systems, effectively the money will be gone forever. We will discuss what kind of economic order might emerge from the fiscal wreckage in a forthcoming chapter.

Many people will be suffering from severe depression since they will have lost everything including loved ones, money, houses and jobs. Numerous people have committed suicide after stock market crashes, for example, 1929, 1988 and 2009, due to financial loss. Unfortunately this might happen again in the future. However, the stock market crash of the future will be different from all previous crashes in one important respect – debt will also disappear – which will be a great cause of celebration for many people.

When the world's banks collapse, people with bank loans will have no bank to pay back the debt. Those who have given personal loans to people will have little reason to get the money back since it will be valueless – except maybe to burn as fuel. Also, as far as I know, financial institutions are not continuously printing out debt records on paper. If this were the case, the world would run out of trees very fast. Who is going to be around to chase up debt repayments anyway? At the beginning of the kingdom everyone is going to be at the same level financially. At the bottom. The Great Financial Collapse (GFC) of the future will lay a foundation for an entirely different economic order.

Nuclear bombs?

Another question asked from time to time is whether nuclear weapons will be used during the battle of Armageddon, as suggested in Zechariah 14:12 “And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.” This appears to be an accurate description of the biological effects of nuclear radiation, these effects were observed for example in the nuclear blast victims in the Japanese cities of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, although the effects described could also be due to some kind of plague or biological warfare agent.

It is also possible that nuclear weapon detonations in space could knock out communications networks over a large area. Nuclear explosions generate an electrical effect called an electromagnetic pulse or EMP. A weapon could be exploded in space several hundred km above the ground without anyone on the ground being aware of the explosion. On the ground, radios, cars, computers, mobile phones etc, would cease to work over an area of several hundred km. Initially people would probably assume there was a power cut or an electrical problem with their car.

Let's imagine that we are standing with Jesus and the saints after the battle of Armageddon. What do we do next? How is the kingdom to be established? It would be a comforting thought to think that the day after the battle of Armageddon, the Sun rises on the Kingdom of God in perfection. It's not going to be like that. A tremendous amount of work has got to be done before the Kingdom of God has been established across the Earth.

God's judgements

The events surrounding Armageddon are only the beginning of God's judgements on the earth. There are several places in scripture that inform us that severe judgements will be required to establish the kingdom, e.g. 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, Ezekiel 39:6, Isaiah 26:21; 66:16, Jeremiah 25:33. These judgments are described symbolically as seven thunders in the Apocalypse (Revelation 10:1-3). The extent of these judgements is chillingly revealed in Jeremiah 25:33 “And the slain of the LORD shall be at that day from one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth: they shall not be lamented, neither gathered, nor buried; they shall be dung upon the ground.”

Several thousand years ago, Enoch prophesied of these pre-kingdom judgments. A record of Enoch's words are found in Jude 14,15 "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgement upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." Notice that the primary reason for God's judgements is the education of people, to convince them that they have been living ungodly lives.

The judgments on the world are also described in Revelation 14, which indicates that the judgments will be coupled to preaching the Gospel. This is not exactly the same as the Gospel preached today, but rather an extension. After Jesus' resurrection, the gospel was extended from the "gospel of the kingdom" to "the things concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12). In a similar manner, in the future the gospel will be extended. The basic meaning of the word gospel is "good news".

At the beginning of the kingdom there will be even more good news. - that Jesus has actually returned and the kingdom set up and so the many prophesied benefits have arrived. The preaching of the kingdom gospel is prophesied in Revelation 14:6,7 "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people, Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to him; for the hour of his judgement is come: and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of water".

The word "everlasting" in the verse above is a translation of the Greek word *aion* meaning *age*, so a literal translation would be "And I saw another angel fly in the midst of heaven, having the Age Gospel to preach..." The Age Gospel, or the gospel of the kingdom, is not eternal since it will only last for a thousand years.

However, in the same way that the current Gospel looks forward to the arrival of Jesus and the establishment of the kingdom, in the kingdom the Gospel will include the good news about the resurrection and judgment at the end of the millennium, the end of death and the return of God to the Earth.

The content of the Age Gospel will also be directly relevant to peoples' everyday life as well as looking forward to the end of the kingdom. People will be told that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the earth and reigning as king over the whole world in Jerusalem and that people are now required to learn about God and live godly lives. Of course, for the vast majority of people this is going to be a major challenge to their existing beliefs and way of life. People will not be given an option. It will not be possible for individuals, towns, cities or countries to declare independence from the kingdom of God.

If nations respond to the preaching of the gospel of the kingdom, they will be spared God's judgments - as was the case, for example, with Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian empire in OT times who repented at the preaching of Jonah. Nineveh is typical of the cities who will

respond to the preaching of the kingdom gospel, as we read in Matthew 12:41 “The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here”.

Conversely, Sodom and Gomorrah are typical of cities that will *reject* the Age Gospel, as we read in Jude 7 “Even as Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”

Individual rulers who submit to the rule of Jesus in the kingdom are typified by the Queen of Sheba as described in Matthew 12:42 “The queen of the south shall rise up in judgement with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

In Psalm 72 we are told that some nations will respond to the Age Gospel: Psalm 72:10,11 “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles shall bring presents: the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him.” The kings of Sheba and Seba represent the consortium of nations known as the King of the South previously discussed.

The necessity of God’s judgements

Why will God’s judgements be necessary? How do we reconcile these judgements with a God of love? God’s judgements will in fact be an act of love. How? God’s judgments will save an enormous amount of suffering. If Jesus’ were not to return, how many people would be murdered, raped, starve to death, die of infectious diseases over the next 1,000 years? The number would be truly astronomical.

God’s judgements will be necessary to establish righteousness in the earth, as we read in Isaiah 26:9 “...when thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn righteousness.” The result of the learning of righteousness will be lasting peace: Isaiah 32:17 “And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever.” The determination of God to achieve this outcome is underscored by Isaiah 42:4 “He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law.”

A fundamental principle found in these verses is that true peace can *only* exist on the basis of righteousness - as in Luke 2:14 “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.” Not many people realise that these words, although spoken every Christmas time, have never been fulfilled and won’t be until the kingdom. It is only when mankind glorifies God in acknowledging that he is right that there can be true peace on this earth.

This principle of righteousness on the basis of peace is what we might call the *Melchizedek Principle*. The Melchizedek Principle is seen very clearly in an event in Abraham’s life. In Genesis 14 we have a record of Abram’s conquest of Tidal king of nations and his compatriots.

After the battle, Melchizedek the king of Salem (the city that later became Jerusalem) and priest of the most high God comes out to meet Abram with bread and wine.

In Hebrews 7 we have a commentary on the section in Genesis about Melchisedech - Hebrews 7:1-2 "For this Melchisedech, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is King of peace. Note that Melchizedek was *first* king of righteousness and *then* king of peace. So, the Melchizedek Principle is a process. After the return of Jesus, God's judgements will teach people righteousness resulting in peace.

A parable of the establishment of peace throughout the world is seen when Jesus quells the storm on the Sea of Galilee. In the Bible, the sea is symbolic of the nations. For example we read in Psalm 65:7 "Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people." Another interesting text is Isaiah 17:12,13 "Woe to the multitude of many people, which make a noise like the noise of the seas; and to the rushing of nations, that make a rushing like the rushing of many waters. The nations shall rush like the rushing of many waters: but God shall rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased like the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing before the whirlwind." When Jesus comes back he will quell the stormy sea of the world. Now is a dark and stormy night, but the dawn approaches when the golden sunshine of the "Sun of righteousness" will reflect off a calm sea. The world will finally be at peace.

Note the connection between Isaiah 17:13 and the destruction of Nebuchadnezzar's image in Daniel 2 in which the fractured sections of the image are ground by the stone and blown away in the wind. Another text in Isaiah uses the stormy sea analogy to symbolise the nations in a state of unrest due to wickedness – Isaiah 57:20-21 "But the wicked are like the troubled sea when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked."

Another simile to the coming of the kingdom is the incident when Jesus and his disciples were in a boat on the Sea of Galilee in a storm. The disciples panic fearing that the boat is going to sink. They wake Jesus calling on him to save them. Jesus quells the storm with "Peace be still" (Mark 4:38-41). Metaphorically Jesus will say the same words when he comes back.

A verse which continues with this theme of Jesus being the calmer of a storm is found in Revelation 15:1-2 "And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvellous, seven angels having the seven last plagues; for in them is filled up the wrath of God. And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them which had gotten victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God."

At first sight we might imagine the saints standing on a sheet of glass over glowing embers. When we examine the text more closely we discover that the idea presented is that the saints

are standing on an expanse of water that has become so calm it is as smooth as glass – like the surface of a lake that is so smooth it is difficult to tell the difference between a photo of the mountain and reflection of the mountain in the water.

The language here is clearly metaphorical since fire does not smooth water. In the Bible fire represents war and judgments – hardly surprising as all forms of war are associated with fire. Therefore, the glowing embers beneath the calm sea of Revelation 15:1-2 has been produced by God's judgements required to establish the kingdom, called the "seven last plagues" in verse one.

A parallel account to Revelation 15:2 is Psalm 149 "Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of the saints. Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their king. Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation. Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds. Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a twoedged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron; To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD."

The prophecy of the establishment of the kingdom in Psalm 49 is highly reminiscent of the 'Song of Moses' sung by Israel on the banks of the Red Sea as they surveyed the bodies of the Egyptian soldiers drowned when the parted sea returned. In principle, a similar situation will occur after Armageddon. The splitting of the Mount of Olives (seas = nations = mountains) will provide a way of escape for Jews in Jerusalem and then the invading armies will be destroyed.

The clean-up operation

After the Battle of Armageddon, a massive clean-up operation will be required before reconstruction work can start in Israel. We are given some intriguing details of this in Ezekiel 39. The most pressing problem will be the vast number of bodies strewn across the landscape of Israel – Ezekiel 39:11 "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it The valley of Hamongog."

There will be so many bodies lying around it will take a long time to bury the dead – Ezekiel 39:12-13 "And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land. Yea, all the people of the land shall bury them; and it shall be to them a renown the day that I shall be glorified, saith the Lord GOD". This will be the first communal activity of the Jews in the land after the battle of Armageddon.

The cleaning up process will be very scrupulous. After the burying of bodies, single bones will be searched for and marked for burial. Men will be specifically employed to travel throughout Israel to finish the job - these will be the first 'official' employees of the kingdom. An account

of the activity is given in Ezekiel 39:14-16 “And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain upon the face of the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man’s bone, then shall he set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog. And also the name of the city shall be Hamonah, Thus shall they cleanse the land.”

No doubt similar clean-up operations will be required elsewhere in the world. However it is possible that the population of the world will be depleted to such an extent that the manpower will not exist to bury the dead outside of Israel, hence the chilling prophecy of Jeremiah 25:33.

Over time, bodies that are not be buried will decay by natural means; another detail of the future revealed in Isaiah 34:1-3 “Come near, ye nations, to hear; and hearken, ye people: let the earth hear, and all that is therein; the world, and all things that come forth of it. For the indignation of the LORD is upon all nations and his fury upon all armies: he hath utterly destroyed them, he hath delivered them to the slaughter. Their slain also shall be cast out, and their stink shall come out of their carcasses, and the mountains shall be melted with their blood.”

In Isaiah 34 a comprehensive picture is painted of the collapse of the kingdom of men. The picture is evocative of a ruined castle with vines entangled with the pillars and fallen blocks of stone with owls hooting to each other across the deserted spaces. Isaiah 34:12-13 “They shall call the nobles thereof to the kingdom, but none shall be there, and all her princes shall be nothing. And thorns shall come up in her palaces, nettles and brambles in the fortresses thereof: and it shall be an habitation of dragons and a court for owls.”

These verses suggest that many cities will be left in ruins. The language of Isaiah 34, clearly applies to “all nations”, and is very similar to an account of the destruction of Babylon - Isaiah 13:22 “And the wild beasts of the islands shall cry in their desolate houses, and dragons in their pleasant palaces: and her time is near to come, and her days shall not be prolonged.”

An effect of the Great Earthquake around the world will be to destroy and severely damage buildings, roads and bridges, elevated freeways etc, causing a mass exodus from cities. Cities require power and water and without these commodities become virtually uninhabitable, as occurred temporarily in New Orleans in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Damage to reinforced concrete structures will increase the rate of decay.

Water can seep into the cracks in damaged concrete causing the reinforcing to rust and expand increasing the ingress of water and corrosion resulting in a runaway effect known as *concrete cancer*. There have been problems with failing concrete bridges the US and Australia. It won’t be long before nature breaks down and removes the concrete icons of the present world. For more information on this see the book *The World Without Us*, or the documentary *Life After People* accessible on YouTube.

Without traffic, road surfaces tend to rise up, which widens cracks enabling more efficient ingress of water further compromising the surface. You may have seen a disused road with weeds growing out of the surface only a few weeks or months after the road was no longer used. In 2004 I was attending a meeting at the Mount Stromlo Observatory, a facility of Australian National University, one year after the devastating fires. At lunchtime I walked over to the ruins of the main administration building of the observatory to have a look. We peered down a corridor now open to the elements with tall weeds growing out of the floor. I pointed out to a colleague that a photo of the ruins could be passed off as the archaeological ruins of ancient Babylon.

Getting the world back to work

The world will be in a dreadful state after collapse of the global economy totally beyond anything the world has ever experienced. People need to work to feel valued, so it will be very important to get the world back to work. The first and most pressing task will be to get people working on building houses, securing water supplies and growing food. Rather than repairing existing infra structure – repairing buildings and roads, restoring electricity supplies, getting oil refineries back in action – it will be more a case of starting again.

Beating ploughshares into swords

A major problem today is that the world is awash with weapons. In some places weapons can be bought as easily as buying food in a supermarket. A top priority at the beginning of the kingdom will be to collect all weapons, which will be an enormous task. Maybe an ‘arms amnesty’ will be announced for the handing in weapons without penalty as happened here in Australia. In the kingdom there will of course be no need for weapons of any sort – they won’t be needed for fighting or for protection from wild animals.

Let’s try to imagine what might happen. After the first announcement that all weapons are to be handed in, many people will be pleased to get rid of them and look forward to a world without weapons. However, human nature being what it is, some people will hold back some or all of their weapons. A second step might be an announcement to try and collect these hidden weapons with a threat of punishment for non-compliance. Even after this, some weapons will probably be hidden away and will have to be collected by force. The saints will be able to read peoples’ minds and discover where weapons are hidden.

Some weapons will be converted into agricultural machinery and implements, as made clear by Isaiah 2:4 “...and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.” However, some weapons will be destroyed – Ezekiel 39:9 “And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the hand-staves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years. So they shall take no wood out of the field, neither shall cut down any of the forests; for they shall burn the weapons with fire...” Admittedly it is difficult to see how modern weapons could be used for fuel. However, these words will come true in some way. Maybe diesel fuel will be scavenged from the tanks of military vehicles and used for heating, cooking and lighting.

The removal of religious systems

The preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom leaves no place for false religions. All the worlds' religions will need to be disbanded, an extremely challenging task. Quite a large section of the Apocalypse is dedicated to the symbolic description of this process, which underlines the importance and difficulty of this task.

Extremely strong language is used to describe the removal of the Catholic system. The Catholic system has the 'honour' of a whole chapter in the book of Revelation. The complete eradication of the Catholic system is summarised in Revelation 18:21 "And a mighty angel took up a stone like a great millstone, and cast it into the sea, saying, Thus with violence shall that great city Babylon be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all." All other false religions will have to be destroyed. A complicating factor, which we will not dwell on here, is that unfortunately some Christian groups will believe that Jesus is the anti-Christ, which will prolong the struggle.

In the book of Revelation, the conflict between Christ and the Saints and the Catholic system is said to last for one hour. This time period is far too short to be taken literally. On the basis of the day-for-a-year principle found in the Bible, one hour is one twelfth of the Jewish day of 12 hours. If we expand a 12-hour day to a year, one hour represents one month, or 30 days. If we then re-apply the day-for-a-year principle we arrive at 30 years.

We might argue about the validity of applying the day-for-a-year principle twice. However, we can cross-check this period from Revelation 8:1 where we read there was "silence in heaven about the space of half an hour". Historically, this corresponds to a period of peace in the reign of Constantine that lasted fourteen and a half years – just short of 15 years, or about half a prophetic hour of 30 years after a double application of the day-for-a-year-principle.

We might wonder why God would take 30 years to remove the Catholic system. Why not overnight? The relatively long period of time exemplifies the mercy and longsuffering of God. People will be given time to realise the error of their ways and repent and acknowledge that they have believed lies – Jeremiah 16:19 "O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit." As an aside we might question why it matters what people believe. It matters because God is a God of truth and truth is of value in itself.

The dissolving of world governments

Another significant moment in the establishment of the kingdom will be the command for all world governments to submit to the rule of Christ. We can well imagine the resistance this will evoke in many parts of the world – especially democracies where people will be outraged at the prospect of being ruled by an unelected government.

There may well be people who are so antipathetic they are willing to fight to the death to uphold the principle of democracy. This is of course understandable as the so-called Western

nations (especially Britain and America) are willing to expend enormous amounts of money and lives to support democracies in regions of the world where democracy has not previously existed (e.g. Afghanistan and Iraq).

Stiff resistance to the rule of Christ is predicted in Psalm 149:6-9 “Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand; To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people; To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron.”

How long will the kingdom last?

We talk about the kingdom being the “millennium” or 1,000 years. What evidence is there for this? The main evidence is in Revelation 20 where a thousand years is mentioned in verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. We might argue that since Revelation is a book of symbol we should interpret the 1,000 year period in chapter 20 symbolically.

In all other prophecies, time periods are *not* taken literally. A good example is the 70 weeks prophecy of Daniel 9. In the Hebrew language the 70 weeks in Daniel 9 is *seventy sevens*, i.e. $70 \times 7 = 490$ which is interpreted as 490 years using the day-for-a-year principle. This particular prophecy is accurate to a day and spans from the 12th day of the first month of 458 BC when Ezra and his compatriots set out for Jerusalem to the 12th day of the first month in the year of Jesus’ crucifixion in AD 33 – a total period of 490 years represented by 490 days.

A valid question is why we should treat the 1,000 years in Revelation 20 differently? One reason for accepting the 1,000 years as a literal period is that it is already at the same scale as the other large time periods. If we were to apply the day-for-a-year principle to 1,000 years we would have a time period of $1,000 \times 365$ which equals 365,000 years, a time period totally out of scale with the length of history recorded in the Bible (i.e. about 6,000 years).

Another powerful argument for a literal 1,000 years is that in all other places throughout scripture, periods specified in years are always literal – e.g. the ages of people, the length of the reigns of kings, Israel wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, etc. There is no indication in Revelation 20 that we should interpret the 1,000 years in any other way. In the absence of any scriptural reason to interpret the 1,000 years differently we should take the 1,000 years at face value.

The creation record describes 6 days of creative work followed by a day of rest. A 1,000-year kingdom of God is consistent with 6,000 years of Biblical history. This 1,000-year rest is alluded to in Hebrews 4:9 “There remaineth therefore a rest (the Greek word for rest is sabbath) to the people of God”. The conversion of a day to a thousand years is found in 2 Peter 3:8 “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”

The oldest person who lived between the time of creation and the flood was Methuselah who lived for 969 years. This suggests an upper limit of about 1,000 years for the life span of mortal

human beings. In the kingdom the saints will live longer than this natural life span indicating that the 1,000 years must be a literal 1,000 years. Key verses are Revelation 20:4,5 [the saints] “... lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished.” People die throughout the kingdom age but it appears from this verse that no mortal being alive at the beginning of the kingdom is alive at the end.

Summary of evidence for a literal 1,000 years

- In scripture, year periods are always to be taken literally – never symbolically.
- There is no indication in Revelation 20 that we should interpret the 1,000 years as anything other than 1,000 years.
- A 1,000 years is consistent with six 1,000 days of spiritual creation followed by a 1,000 year spiritual Sabbath.
- A 1,000 years is just enough to fit in the maximum duration of a mortal life (e.g. Methuselah lived for 969 years).

Certainty in the kingdom

A major difference between now and the kingdom is the future will be known. It will be known that Jesus and the saints will rule over the world for 1,000 years. The information is already there in Revelation 20 and people will be able to read this in the kingdom. This is totally unlike today. In a democracy it is impossible to know for sure what type of government will be elected next and governments are even removed before their term of office ends. At the beginning of the kingdom it will be absolutely certain that in 500 years the feast of tabernacles will be held in Jerusalem. It is very difficult for us to imagine how this will change the psychology of the mortal subjects.

Today people joke that there are only two certain things in life – death and taxes. A few centuries into the kingdom death will in fact become *uncertain* as many people will live right up to the end of the kingdom and if they are faithful will not be hurt by the second death but become immortal. Tax is a concept of the human world. Clearly the angels of God don't pay tax in heaven. Therefore in the light of scripture we can assert with absolute certainty that death and taxes will end!

4. Topographical changes

When Jesus' feet touch the Mount of Olives the world will know something very unusual is happening in Israel. The splitting of the Mount of Olives will be the first visible sign to the world that Jesus is in the Earth. It is quite possible that this event will be televised. In the battle of Armageddon several countries will have a military presence in Israel, possibly as part of a United Nations force. Therefore it is highly likely that news organisations will be present to see Jesus and the saints descending on the Mount of Olives and the ensuing earthquake.

However, the arrival of Jesus and the saints will be such an extraordinary event that most people will probably assume they are seeing a fictional movie. The visibility of the arrival of Jesus is referred to in Revelation 1:7 "Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen". The clouds mentioned in this verse echo the words of the angel that appeared when Jesus ascended to heaven (Acts 1:9,10). In Luke 17:24 the arrival of Jesus is described as being like a brilliant flash of lightning.

The earthquake triggered by the arrival of Jesus on the Mount of Olives will cause significant topographical changes to the land of Israel - Zechariah 14:4-5 "And his [Jesus] feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north and half toward the south. And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal; yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."

The Mount of Olives has two peaks separated by a natural fault line that is a spur off the East Africa Rift Valley fault line. When the Mt. Olives splits, half of the mountain will go north and the other half south, forming a valley between. The western limit of this valley is a place called *Azal*. An inspection of any map of Jerusalem will not reveal any place called *Azal* today.

The meaning of the Hebrew word *Azal* is *near*. This probably means that the valley will not reach the centre of Jerusalem but will come close or near. What about the other direction? How far will the valley stretch eastwards? The natural limit would appear to be the Jordan Valley, known as the *Arabah* in the Hebrew. Other places in the Bible refer to a river originating in the temple in Jerusalem that will extend to the region of the Dead Sea and the Arabah immediately to the north. This implies that the new valley will be the conduit for this new river.

In Zechariah 14:5 the Great Earthquake is briefly compared to an earthquake that occurred in Jerusalem in the reign of Uzziah (767-740 BC), king of Judah. Although the earthquake in Uzziah's time would have been much smaller than the Great Earthquake of the future, it was large enough to cause people to flee from Jerusalem. Jerusalem has always been a fairly

compact city as it is built on a relatively small hill, Mount Zion, surrounded by deep valleys. It is possible that people escaped from the city to avoid being crushed by falling masonry. We do not normally think of Jerusalem as an earthquake prone region, however, earthquakes have occurred in the past, for example in 1927.

A geological map of Jerusalem shows that the city of Jerusalem is geologically separate from the surrounding rock structures. As the Mount of Olives splits in two, the central region of Jerusalem, known as Mount Zion will be elevated above the hills surrounding Jerusalem. When viewed from the Temple Mount, the hills surrounding Jerusalem are higher.

The effect of the Great Earthquake on the city of Jerusalem and environs is described in Zechariah 14:10 “All the land shall be turned as a plain from Gebah to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king’s winepresses.” Taking this verse at face value, it appears that Jerusalem will be in the middle of a plain several km wide. However, when we dig deeper we discover that the situation will be slightly different from what we might imagine.

The word “plain” in Zechariah 14:10 is a translation of the Hebrew word *Arabah*, which refers to the Jordan Valley. Therefore this verse means that Jerusalem will be in the middle of a valley similar to the Arabah. The word *turned* in Zechariah 14:10 is a translation of the Hebrew word *cabab* (5437) meaning *revolve, surrounded, to border*. So we can be more specific and say that Jerusalem will be *surrounded* by an Arabah-like region. Maybe the picture we are being given is of Jerusalem on a mountain in the middle of an east-west valley of similar width as the Arabah formed by the splitting of the Mount of Olives.

The northern limit of this valley is *Geba* that exists today about 10 km north of Mt. Zion. The southern-most boundary of the valley is *Rimmon*. This is more difficult to identify as there are three locations in Israel with this name, one 44 km south west of Jerusalem, another 20 km north of Jerusalem and a third in the north of Israel between the Sea of Galilee and Mt. Carmel. However, Zechariah 14:10 makes it clear than the future Rimmon will be *south* of Jerusalem, which excludes the two northern Rimmons.

However, it is difficult to see how an Arabah-like valley running from east to west could stretch 10 km north of Mt. Zion and 44 km to the south. As can be seen from a map of Israel, the mountains of Judea run several km south of Jerusalem and so these would have to be levelled to enable such a valley to exist. The width of the Jordan Valley, which runs in a north-south direction east of Jerusalem, is about 20 km. Therefore, if the valley surrounding Jerusalem is similar to the Jordan valley we would expect the sides of the new valley to extend 10 km north and 10 km south of Jerusalem.

Gebah is 10 km north of Jerusalem, exactly where we would expect the northern side of the valley to be. On the basis of symmetry, we would expect the southern Rimmon to be 10 km south of Jerusalem. If this is the case, the Rimmon of Zechariah 14:10 does not yet exist. The

fact that the most southerly of the three extant Rimmons is so far from Jerusalem and is south west rather than south suggests that the Rimmon in Zechariah 14 is a new Rimmon. In the Hebrew, Rimmon means *pomegranate*, so maybe in the future there will be a new town on the southern side of the new valley famous for its pomegranates.

The living waters

One of the consequences of the topographical changes in the land of Israel is that a spring will form on the peak of Mount Zion. We are told that half the water will flow into the Dead Sea and the other half into the Mediterranean; Zechariah 14:8 “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and winter shall it be.”

A spring on a mountain is quite normal, many of the worlds’ rivers arise in mountainous regions, for example the Rhine and Danube in Europe. However, the mountain in the middle of the temple would be far too small and low to hold enough snow to supply a river all year round and therefore the source must be elsewhere.

At the moment no river has its source anywhere near Jerusalem. The only river that flows all year round, as required by the prophecy, is the River Jordan. This indicates that there must be a special arrangement for delivering water to the top of Mount Zion. Since water cannot flow uphill this presumes that some kind of passage will be formed through the Judean mountains to allow water to flow from Mt. Zion to the Dead Sea.

Clearly the splitting of the Mt. of Olives will provide such a passage. It is possible to identify a possible route by examining the current topography. East of Jerusalem is a natural channel, *Wadi Mukalik* that descends towards the Jordan Valley and runs into Wadi Dabar. Since *dabar* is the Hebrew word for “word” it would be highly appropriate if the living waters entered the Dead Sea via Wadi Dabar.

The fact that the waters are living indicates the water is fresh and not salty like the water in the Dead Sea today. Two seas are mentioned, the *hinder* sea and *former* sea. In Hebrew, *former* means *in front when facing east*, so from the perspective of Mount Zion this means the former sea is the Dead Sea and the hinder sea the Mediterranean.

An interesting question is how water bubbling out of *Zion Spring* will be able to reach these two destinations in opposite directions? One possibility is that the water from Zion Spring splits into two streams – one flowing west to the Mediterranean and the other east to the Dead Sea.

The waters flowing from Jerusalem will bring the Dead Sea to life. Maybe in the kingdom the Dead Sea will be renamed the *Live Sea* or the *Sea of Life*. For the purposes of this book we will call it the *Live Sea*. Ezekiel gives us some more details about the Live Sea - “And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto Eneglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many” (Ezekiel 47:10). The first thing to notice is that the fish caught in the Live

Sea will be of the same kind as those in the Mediterranean Sea. The NKJ translation is clearer: “...Their fish will be of the same kinds as the fish of the Great Sea, exceeding many.”

It is possible a channel will exist between the Live and Mediterranean Seas allowing fish to swim back and forth. Another possibility is that the Live Sea will be directly stocked with salt water fish at the beginning of the kingdom. As is well known, the Dead Sea today is too salty for fish to survive. If the Live Sea was supplied with water from the Mediterranean the salinity would be somewhere between sea water and Dead Sea water. It is possible that after the earthquake the Dead Sea will be above sea level to enable water to flow from the Live Sea to the Mediterranean. The Dead Sea is 1250 feet below sea level so a rise of at least this amount will be required.

If the floor of the Dead Sea is elevated this will reverse what happened when Sodom and Gomorra were destroyed. We are told in Genesis 14:3 that in the time of Abraham, the Dead Sea was the site of a battle between the local kings of the day. The relevant text reads: “...in the vale of Siddim, which is the salt sea.”

It would be very difficult to fight a battle in the waters of the Dead Sea, even in boats. This implies that the Vale of Siddim *became* the Dead Sea when Sodom and Gomorra were destroyed. The name Siddim (7708) has the meaning of something which is spread out – i.e. a flat area and, of course, a substantial amount of space would be required for armies to fight.

We are given a fairly detailed description of what this region was like prior to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 13:10 “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorra, even as the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.” Zoar was one of the cities of the plain, not a city of Egypt as we might first suppose from this text.

This suggests that Zoar was on the border of the cities of the plain. Zoar is the city where Lot wanted to settle after leaving Sodom and Gomorrah and therefore it must have been reasonably close to Sodom and Gomorrah. The phrase “before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorra” suggests that the plain of Jordan was no longer a well-watered plain after the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.

In Genesis 14, the plain of Siddim is most probably being compared to the Nile delta that is made fertile by the silt-laden waters of the Nile. It is possible that in the past, before the formation of the Dead Sea, the River Jordan flowed all the way to the Gulf of Aqaba in the south. Looking at a map of the region it is easy to see how this could have been. The Jordan may also have received tributaries from the mountains of Judea to the west and the hills of Moab and Edom to the east.

A number of possible locations have been identified for Sodom and Gomorrah. Some of the latest research indicates that the site may have been at Tall el-Hammam about 14 km north east

of the top of the Dead Sea. If this was the case the Jordan plain would have been a very fertile and the site of intensive agricultural production.

At the time the cities were destroyed, the ground may have sunk compressing an underground reservoir of bituminous material, which was forced up around the edges of the Siddim geological plate, which ignited in a massive fire storm engulfing the cities. After the sinking of the valley floor, the flow of water into the Aqaba ceased and water began to fill the floor of the valley, eventually becoming the Dead Sea.

It is possible that only the shallow southern section of the Dead Sea existed in Lot's time fed by the River Jordan. There may have been a river delta at the entrance to the lake, consistent with the fertility of the region being similar to the Nile Delta. It is possible that in the past the water flowed into the Gulf of Aqaba to the south, which would be natural as many rivers originate in mountainous regions and flow through valleys on their way to the sea. If the plain was higher than today, water would have flowed into the lake and out again on its downhill journey to the Gulf of Aqaba.

The topographical changes that will occur in the land of Israel after the splitting of the Mount of Olives will greatly increase the number of streams increasing the fertility, effectively recreating the Garden of Eden, as suggested by Genesis 13:10. We will discuss agriculture in the kingdom in a forthcoming chapter.

In Ezekiel 47:10 we are given the name of another place that does not yet exist – a place on the shores of the Live Sea called *Eneglaim*. A particular feature of this location is that it will be a suitable place for fishermen to spread their nets. When we look at the next verse, i.e. Ezekiel 47:11, we are told that "... the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof will not be healed, they shall be given to salt." This probably indicates that water will not flow from the southern end of the Live Sea so there is a region similar to the Dead Sea today – maybe it will serve as a reminder of what the Live Sea used to be like.

Engedi is a place that exists today and is on the western bank of the Dead Sea about half way down. For some reason fishermen will not fish, or at least mend their nets, further south of Engedi. The reason could be that the salinity of the water south of Engedi is too high even for salt water fish. The fresh water flowing into the Live Sea from Zion Spring may create a salinity gradient along the length of the Live Sea, with water at the northern end close to where the fresh water stream enters being essentially fresh water, then a sea water section further south and then a Dead Sea section at the southern end.

Another reason why the fishermen do not mend their nets south of Engedi is that this will be the shoreline of the city *Yahweh Shamar*. This city does not yet exist but will be built to the south of Jerusalem to provide accommodation for the large number of people travelling to and from the temple. A lot of people coming to Jerusalem in the kingdom will have families and therefore a lot of children may play on the beach of the live Sea next to Yahweh Shamar, so it will not be a good place to mend nets.

It follows from the above discussion that Eneglaim will be *north* of Engedi and mark the upper bound of the Live Sea. Engedi does exist today and the word Engedi means *fountain of the kid*. According to Robinson, the famous geographer of the Holy Land, the spring at Engedi “bursts forth upon a sort of narrow terrace or shelf of the mountain (which overhangs the lake), still more than 400 feet above the sea. The stream rushes down the steep descent of the mountain below and its course is hidden by a luxuriant thicket and trees and shrubs belonging to a more southern clime.” The similarity of the word Eneglaim to Engedi gives us an insight into the geographical features of this future location.

According to Strong’s Eneglaim (5882) means *fountain of two calves* and is derived from the Hebrew word *ayin* (5869) meaning *fountain* and is the dual of *egel* (5695) meaning a male calf, known for frisking around. This seems to suggest that Eneglaim will be similar to Engedi, except that there will be *two* streams rather than *one*. It is possible that Eneglaim will be where the river flowing eastward from Mount Zion will divide, with half the water flowing north to the Mediterranean via Shittim and the other half south to the Live Sea.

We know from Zechariah 14:8 that the flow of water from the temple will be constant throughout the year. In most cases the flow of a river fluctuates throughout the year and a dam is required to maintain constant flow throughout the year. For example, the Aswan Dam was built in Egypt in an attempt to even out the large annual variation of the Nile flow. In the kingdom, the constant flow of water from the temple will enable a constant supply of water to Israel throughout the year. As we shall see in a later chapter, this will be essential to maintain the high agricultural production required to feed the continuous stream of people visiting Israel throughout the year.

Zebulun Haven

The next issue to address is how water flowing eastwards from Jerusalem into the Live Sea also manages to flow into the Mediterranean in the opposite direction. As we have seen, the fact that the same species of fish will be caught in the Live Sea as the Mediterranean suggests a connection between the two.

If this is the case, one possibility is that the water leaving the temple flows down to the Jordan Valley and then northward along the valley flowing out of a connection with the Mediterranean Sea somewhere in the north of Israel. As we have seen, it is possible that the Great Earthquake will raise the floor of the Jordan Valley so it is above sea level but below the height of Mount Zion allowing water to flow downhill from Zion to the Mediterranean.

It is interesting to reflect on the fact that in the kingdom the water in the Jordan will flow in reverse compared to today. Currently, water flows from Mt. Hermon, north of Israel, into the Sea of Galilee and then down the Jordan Valley into the Dead Sea. The flow of the Jordan today can be seen as a metaphor for mortality, a stream of life from birth to the grave – in the words of one of our hymns: “time like a river bears all its sons away”. In the future God’s word will flow out from Jerusalem like a river to all corners of the world, described poetically

in Amos 5:24 “But let judgment run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream.” and Isaiah 2:3 “...for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem”.

Assuming that water does descend from Mount Zion to the Live Sea and flows up the Jordan Valley, the next issue to address is how water enters the Mediterranean. At the present time, all of the Jordan Valley between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea is below sea level. Even the Sea of Galilee is about 600 feet below sea level and much of the Jezreel valley between the Haifa and the Jordan Valley is also below sea level.

An interesting possibility is that one of the effects of the splitting of the Mt. of Olives will be the opening of a channel between Haifa and the Jezreel Valley. It is possible that this natural basin will be inundated with seawater producing a vast inland harbour, which for the purposes of this book we will call *Zebulun Haven*.

Two passages of scripture that suggest this possibility are Genesis 49:13 “Zebulun shall dwell at the haven of the sea; and he shall be for a haven of ships; and his border shall be unto Zidon.” and Deuteronomy 33:18,19 “And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun in thy going out; and Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in sand.”

If we look at a map showing the boundaries of the tribes of Israel we find that both Zebulun and Issachar are land locked. So how could Zebulun become a haven for ships? The southern border of Zebulun is the Brook Kishon that tracks along the northern slopes of the Carmel range. If the Jezreel Valley becomes an inland sea, the southern border of Zebulun will be on the northern shore of this sea and Issachar on the north eastern border. It is possible that in the future Mount Tabor will be an island.

The text in Deuteronomy mentions people going to a *mountain* to offer sacrifices, which may refer to people going up to the temple in Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. It is possible that people will stay in tents or some other type of accommodation prior to setting out for Jerusalem and when waiting to board ship to travel back home. The latter part of Deuteronomy 33:19 suggests that in the kingdom, Zebulun and Issachar will benefit from the maritime industries and associated trade, by virtue of being beside the sea.

People who arrive in Israel via Zebulun Haven will of course some time later depart from their home country from Zebulun Haven –unless some people elect to travel through Israel and depart from Eilat on a kind of round the world trip. From a spiritual point of view, in the kingdom, Jerusalem will be a beacon for the whole world, as we read in Isaiah 62:1-2 “For Zion’s sake I will not hold my peace and for Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth.”

Jesus began his teaching in the Galilee region –Mathew 4:15-16 “The land of Zabulon, and the land of Naphthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region of the shadow of death light is sprung up.” It is appropriate that this region should be one of the main regions in Israel where the light of the gospel (of the kingdom) is transported to the world. Zebulun Have will probably receive ships from the Mediterranean countries and the Caribbean and the Americas.

The major port in the time of Solomon, king of Israel, was Eilat at the top of the Gulf of Aqaba. In view of the importance of this port in the reign of Solomon, a type of the reign of the Lord Jesus Christ in the kingdom, it is reasonable to suppose that Eilat will be a major port in the kingdom. If so, this will be the port that receives people from the Asia, the east coast of Africa, Oceania and the Pacific.

Another interesting question is what will happen to the Sea of Galilee in view of these changes? At the moment, the Sea of Galilee is about 600 feet below sea level, which means it could become flooded if there is a connection between the Jordan Valley and the Mediterranean Sea. However, if the Jordan Valley is raised above sea level it is possible that the Galilee region will also be raised. If this were the case water descending from the snow-covered slopes of Mt Hermon (9,000 feet above sea level) would flow into the Sea of Galilee (as at present) and continue downwards into Zebulun Haven.

Summary of what we know about Dead Sea of the future

- Half of the water from the temple flows into the Dead Sea and half into the Mediterranean
- The fish caught in the Live Sea are of the same type as those in the Mediterranean
- Fishermen will spread their nets between Eneglain and Engedi
- The southern section of the sea will not be healed (i.e. remain salty and dead)
- It will be possible for ships to get close to Jerusalem
- Zebulun will become a haven for ships
- People will go from Zebulun and Isaachar to Jerusalem

Piecing together the above information, the following scenario is possible. The water that flows out from the temple forms a single stream as it flows through a forest (more about this later) on its way to the Live Sea. At a certain point, called Eneglain, probably close to Jericho, the stream splits in two. One half runs south, passing through the Valley of Achor and flows into the Live Sea. The other half flows into the plain of Shittim and turns northwards towards the plain of Jezreel.

A slight variation of the above scenario is that rather than water flowing directly to the plain of Shittim, water might flow into the Live Sea first and then flow through Shittim on the way to

the Mediterranean Sea. Whatever the details of the flow, fish are able to swim from the Mediterranean to the Live Sea. If there is a direct connection between the Mediterranean and Live Sea, the channel could pass through the Jezreel Valley, which would become a vast inland harbour, which for the purposes of this book we will call *Zebulun Haven*.

Zebulun Have would make an ideal location for ships to harbour transporting people to and from Israel to visit the temple in Jerusalem. From Isaiah 33:21 it appears that the water channel between the Mediterranean Sea and the Live Sea will be large enough for ocean going ships to navigate, but they will not be allowed to get close to Jerusalem. Isaiah 33:20,21 “Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken. But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.” It appears that the reason for the ship exclusion zone is reduce the hustle and bustle in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

Zion Spring

Another intriguing question is what is the source of water for Zion Spring? We are told that that the source is beneath the altar of the temple on the pinnacle of Mount Zion. This is unlike any extant springs today. Sources of rivers tend to be lower down on mountain sides. It is clear that if the water emanates from beneath the altar, the highest point of the mountain, the spring cannot be a normal spring.

One possibility is that the water supplying Zion Spring actually comes from Mount Hermon about 200 km to the north of Jerusalem. This is suggested by a verse that appears in Psalm 133, which is quoted in its entirety below to give the context. Psalm 133:1-3 “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments: As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing even life for evermore.”

This Psalm is talking about the anointing of Aaron as the High Priest in Israel at the time of the Exodus. The anointing oil would have flowed down his beard and onto the neck collar of his robe (not all the way down to the hem of his robe as we might initially suppose). In Psalm 33, the psalmist is drawing an analogy between the downward motion of the anointing oil on Aaron and dew descending on the mountains of Zion.

An intriguing aspect of this analogy is that at present there is no connection between the dew that falls on Mount Hermon in the north of Israel and Mount Zion in the centre of Jerusalem 200 km to the south. At the present time, the dew, rain and snow that falls on Mount Hermon eventually flows into the Jordan River and on into the Dead Sea (or at least it used to).

We have seen that the current flow of the Jordan is a metaphor for mortality. The reverse flow in the kingdom will be a metaphor for immortality. Although we cannot be dogmatic, it would

be fitting if it was the same water from Mount Herman that was flowing in reverse from the Live Sea in the kingdom. If this is the case, the water from Mount Heron will somehow have to be channelled to Mount Zion and become the Zion Spring.

Mt. Hermon is actually three peaks about 2,814 m (9,232 ft) in height. The area of the range is 1,000 km² with an average precipitation of 1200 – 1500 mm per year, most of which is snow. Mt. Hermon has snow on the peaks for most of the year, although snow cover has been reducing due to climate change. Therefore the capacity of this reservoir is about 1.5 trillion litres, equivalent to 600,000 Olympic swimming pools. This is a reasonable amount of water for irrigating the relatively small country of Israel. In the kingdom the precipitation on Mt. Hermon will most likely be higher than today after repair of the world's climate.

Is a connection between Mount Zion and Mount Hermon practically possible? A dam could be built in the foot hills of Mount Hermon at an elevation higher than Zion Spring with an underground pipe connecting the two. As long as the gradient of the pipe is sufficient to overcome friction losses there will be enough pressure to provide a significant flow at Zion Spring. The amount of friction is strongly dependent on pipe diameter – the greater the diameter the lower the friction in proportion to the flow.

The pipe would need to be 200 km in length. This might seem a very long way for a water pipe, but much longer pipes exist today connecting dams to urban areas. Such a pipeline would not need to be downhill for the entire distance since inverted siphons could be used to cross valleys. In an inverted siphon, water flowing downhill pushes the water ahead uphill, therefore if the difference in height between Mount Herman Dam and Mount Zion is enough to overcome friction along the 200 km long pipe water will flow.

I personally imagine German engineers being in charge of the design and building of the mechanical features of the temple and the pipe system transporting water from Mt. Hermon to the temple. German engineers are renowned for their attention to detail and their rejection of shoddy work. The temple will be in uses 24/7 for a thousand years and so it will need to be properly engineered.

5. Environmental changes

In this section of our study we will consider changes to the natural environment at the commencement of the kingdom. As we shall see as our study progresses there is a large amount of scriptural evidence for a vast improvement in the natural environment of Israel and the world in the kingdom. An interesting question is whether God will intervene to produce a better environment or whether this will be a task given to mankind in the kingdom?

The current situation

At the present time there is great deal of concern about the long-term environmental future of the world. There is evidence to suggest that the emission of greenhouse gases since the beginning of the industrial revolution, principally carbon dioxide (CO₂), is causing the average temperature of the world to increase – a process known as *global warming*. Global warming has been implicated in the increasing number of violent and destructive storms throughout the world – Hurricane Katrina being prime example.

Another clear indication that climate change is real is the fact that the worlds insurance companies are paying out increasing amounts of money for the repair of storm damage. At the beginning of 2009, insurance companies in Australia warned customers that household insurance premiums would have to increase for this reason.

However, although there is general agreement that climate change is occurring there is some doubt as to whether this is part of a natural cycle or whether caused by humankind. It is of course possible that human activity is accelerating a natural trend. Later in this study we will look at scripture evidence that climate change may be the result of human activity. Irrespective of the actual origin of climate change there is no doubt that something is going on and that people are seriously worried.

Whatever the true cause of climate change, there is no doubt that the environment has been damaged by humankind. For example, the emission of a class of chemicals known as CFCs (chlorofluorocarbons) used in many industrial processes and as refrigerants and propellants in aerosol cans has been implicated in the thinning of the ozone layer above the poles and has caused a range of deleterious effects including an increase in the rate of skin cancer in Australia, particularly Queensland. Studies have shown that the increased intensity of ultraviolet light is causing harm to aquatic organisms that live in shallow water. Even if CFC emissions were to fall to zero today, it would take until the middle of this century for ozone depletion to stabilise, let alone reverse.

Some very frightening facts are emerging from studies into the effects of global warming. The amount of oxygen that can be dissolved in fish-blood decreases with an increase in temperature. As a result fish have to increase their heart rate to get the same amount of oxygen to the tissues – in the end they die of a heart attack. The effects are seen most clearly on the

edge of the arctic circles – some animals are being born too early and have nothing to eat because the organisms that they depend on in the food chain have not yet been born. This is a very serious problem – new born animals need food right away – they can't wait several weeks for food to arrive!

Air pollution in cities is thought to be responsible for an increase in the incidence of juvenile respiratory problems, asthma for example. Chemical fertilizers have caused malformations in children in the vicinity of the Aral Sea in Russia. Large areas of the world are being deforested causing damage to the soil and rapid run off and flash flooding.

An interesting question is whether the environmental crisis has been predicted in the Bible. Consider Luke 21:25,26 “And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” These verses are generally taken as referring metaphorically to social unrest afflicting the world immediately prior to the return of Jesus. No doubt this is the primary meaning as we can demonstrate that the sun, moon and stars are symbolic of government (Isaiah 1:1-2) and the sea represents the nations (Isaiah 57:20,21).

However, a good case can now be made for these verses also referring to the effects of global warming. Rather than changing the entire meaning of these verses we can say that we now know that global warming is a contributing factor to the unrest prophesied in these verses. Coastlines are being eroded more rapidly than in the past – most of us have seen pictures of houses about to topple of eroded cliffs. These effects are directly affecting peoples' lives.

A dramatic example of this is the tiny coral atoll nation of Tuvalu in the South Pacific that is gradually being inundated by the rise in sea level. Some Tuvaluan families have relocated elsewhere, Brisbane for example. The Marshall Islands in the middle of the Pacific are also rapidly disappearing. Ten thousand Marshall Islanders have already relocated to Springdale in Arkansas in the US.

There is serious concern about the effects of the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets melting that would result in a rise in sea level of about 7 m, which of course would seriously affect all of the world's coastal cities. New data indicates that ice in the Arctic and Antarctic regions is melting more rapidly than previously thought.

There is concern that melting could go beyond the point of no return resulting in an irreversible change in climate. If the point of no return is passed before the return of Jesus divine intervention will probably be required to correct the situation at the beginning of the kingdom. Another possibility is that Jesus will return before the world reaches the point of no return and the decline will be reversed.

US President Barak Obama speaks of a ‘planet in peril’, a phrase which resonates with Luke 21:26. The effects of climate change are already here and are getting worse – in other words

“coming on the earth”. The most frightening scenario, which I think is referred to in Luke 21:26, is the threat of the runaway greenhouse effect, sometimes known as the Venus Syndrome. In other words, if greenhouse emissions continue unabated the Earth could become like Venus. This might seem a far-fetched possibility, but it is a real concern. For example google “runaway greenhouse” and see what you find. The United Nations Environment Program refers to this scenario on the first page of the climate change website.

From a purely human point of view, this is a very frightening possibility, since the result will be the end of the human race. Science fiction films might give the impression that a giant spaceship could be built to transport the human race across the oceans of space to a distant paradise. This would be extremely difficult, if not impossible, to do on the relatively short timescale of the runaway greenhouse effect. A major problem is that a second Earth has not yet even been found.

Another passage of scripture that can be reasonably applied to the environmental crisis, is Isaiah 24:5-6 “The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left.” At first sight this verse may appear to describe some sort of conflagration.

The Hebrew word translated as *burned* is *charar* (2788) one of the meanings is to *dry up*. *Charar* is the root of *charer* which means *an arid or parched place* and is translated as *parched* in Jeremiah 17:5,6 “Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD. For he shall be like the heath in the desert, and shall not see when good cometh; but he shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness, in a salt land not inhabited.” Studies have shown that global warming will increase the number bushfires around the world. This may in fact already be happening, and so a literal burning is consistent with this verse.

The above verse is very interesting in the context of the current discussion as it informs us that there is a link between an ungodly way of life and a dry environment. A dramatic example of this occurred in the days of Ahab king of Israel when the nation was afflicted by three and a half years of drought, reflecting a drought of the Word of God – the water of life. In relation to the verses in Jeremiah quoted above it is apparent that the greed of man has led to transgressions of the laws of nature with the long-term effects that are now evident. A major element in the global environmental crisis is lack of fresh water, which of course produces parched ground.

Another relevant verse is Revelation 11:18 “And the nations were angry, and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged, and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear the name, small and great; and shouldest them that destroy the earth.” This verse is clearly speaking about the time of the

end when Jesus returns to resurrect the dead. The earth is afflicted by moral and physical corruption. Both types of corruption will be removed in the kingdom.

One objection to the verses in Isaiah 24 being applied to the whole world is that the verses at the beginning of the chapter are clearly directed at Israel and can be applied to the ‘emptying’ of Israel at the hands of the Babylonians and Romans. However, the book of Isaiah clearly contains a lot of information about the kingdom and is not limited to the borders of historical Israel. The desolations spoken of in Isaiah 24 are applicable globally since the spiritual condition of the nations is no better than that of Israel.

Environmental improvements in the kingdom

Some of the environmental improvements in the kingdom will be a result of the Great Earthquake – for example the appearance of streams of water throughout Israel. Other major improvements will be the result of a change in the everyday life of the world’s population. The Great Earthquake will disrupt transport and will probably put many oil wells and refineries out of action and therefore result in a sharp decline in road traffic. This alone will dramatically reduce carbon emissions and other noxious fumes such as nitrous compounds.

Another major environmental issue that will have to be dealt with in the kingdom is the disposal of large amounts of radioactive waste in various places throughout the world, for example nuclear power station ‘graveyards’ such as Chernobyl and Three Mile Island. Radioactive waste remains dangerous for thousands of years. No known natural process can reduce radioactivity. What is to be done with this waste in the kingdom? Maybe some kind of divine intervention will be required to safely dispose of this material.

One way to solve the problem of radioactive waste would be to put it into the mantle of the Earth where it came from in the first place anyway – the centre of the Earth is molten because of naturally occurring radioactivity. Maybe the angels will provide information on the best location to drill down to dispose of this waste. Of course, transporting this highly dangerous material to the disposal point will require a lot of effort. Maybe the disposal of the waste deep in the earth from where it came in the first place is the sort of solution that God would approve of.

Another major issue to be dealt with is the vast number of unexploded mines scattered across the world that remain dangerous for several years. An enormous number of children are killed and maimed every year while playing. A task force will need to be assembled to deal with this problem. There are people in the military that have expertise in finding and destroying mines. Therefore it would make sense to build a global task force from various mine disposal units from national armies to detect and remove all mines.

Of course this problem is limited to only some parts of the world, e.g. Cambodia, Vietnam, Lebanon etc. This task will probably take several years. When all the mines have been removed the units will be disbanded as there will no longer be any need for military units. It would also make sense to use military units to destroy their own weapons.

Across the world a huge number of trees has been lost, since 1975, 1% of the world's forests have been lost every year. This has led to serious flooding in countries such as Bangladesh. Trees soak up the water from heavy rainfall and so when there are no trees water runs off the land causing destructive flash floods.

A simple way to solve the problem of flash flooding is to plant more trees. Tree planting is already done in many parts of the world. Over the last several years there has been a massive tree planting operation in the land of Israel involving school children and the general public. Numerous trees are being planted in the Negev, which accounts for 60% of the land area of Israel.

No doubt tree planting will continue into the kingdom age so that Israel becomes like a huge park, as indicated by a number of verses, for example Ezekiel 36:34-35 “And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by. And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.” Note the comparison with the Garden of Eden.

The clear implication is that the land of Israel will become like the Garden of Eden *before* Adam and Eve were ejected – i.e. extremely fertile without weeds and insect pests (e.g. fruit flies etc). It also follows from this that the curse placed on the ground in the Garden of Eden will be lifted in the kingdom. We will see confirmation of this in a subsequent chapter of this book dealing with agriculture in the kingdom.

Another text containing information about the natural environment of the kingdom is Isaiah 35:1-2 “The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly, and rejoice even with joy and singing: the glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the LORD, and the excellency of our God.” The implication of these verses is that deserts will be watered. Many desert regions of the world undergo a remarkable transformation after rain – this is true of Australia. For example the state of Western Australia is famous for the profusion of wild flowers that spring up in the desert after rain.

The following verses in Isaiah indicate that the greening of the Negev will be due to water: “...for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert. And the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water: in the habitation of dragons, where each lay, shall be grass with reeds and rushes.” (Isaiah 35:6,7).

Another text says: “I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, the shittah tree, and the myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the fir tree, and the pine, and the box tree together” (Isaiah 41:18-19). Trees require a certain amount of water to exist.

The change to the environment of Israel is described further: “Behold, I will do a new thing; now it shall spring forth; shall ye not know it? I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert. The beast of the field shall honour me, the dragons and the owls, because I give waters in the wilderness, and rivers in the desert, to give drink to my people, the chosen.” (Isaiah 43:19-20). “For the LORD shall comfort Zion: he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD...” (Isaiah 51:3). These verses leave us in no doubt that in the future the supply of water from rivers in Israel will be much greater than today.

In 2008 I was staying at my parents-in-law’s place in a desert region of South Australia. Just after some rain, a cactus plant near the house blossomed, but only lasted a few days. One of my daughters commented on how much the blossoms looked like roses which reminded me of Isaiah 35.

An interesting question is whether Isaiah 35 applies only to Israel, especially the Negev, or includes the rest of the world. The Negev desert south of the Dead Sea is one of the most barren places on earth. Isaiah 35 probably applies mostly to the land of Israel. As we have already discussed the greening of Israel will be necessary to feed to large number of people coming and going throughout the year to worship God at the temple.

We saw in the previous chapter that Zion Spring will water a large area of Israel. It is possible that the topographical conditions that existed in the Garden of Eden will be recreated in the future. The source of a large river existed somewhere in the Garden of Eden with a water flow sufficient to supply four distributaries - Genesis 2:10-14 “And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted and became into four heads. The name of the first is Pison: that is it which compasseth the whole land of Havilah, where there is gold; And the gold of that land is good; there is bdellium and the onyx stone. And the name of the second river is Gihon: the same is that compasseth the whole land of Ethiopia. And the name of the third river is Hiddekel [Tigris]: that is it which goeth toward the east of Assyria. And the fourth river is Euphrates.”

Even if the source of this river was not in the vicinity of Jerusalem, we know that in the past there was a major fountain providing water to regions that are desert today. The River of Eden supplied the Tigris and Euphrates that still flow into the Persian Gulf today, and the Gihon that flowed into Africa and the Pison that irrigated the Arabian Peninsula. From this it is likely that the River of Eden was somewhere in Israel.

A major source of water has been discovered under the Sinai Peninsula (Issar, A. 1985. Fossil water under the Sinai-Negev Peninsula. *Scientific American* 253(1):104-110) which could be the future source of water for the temple fountain. The water is contained in a sandstone aquifer and may hold as much as 200 trillion litres. This is equivalent to a water flow of over 6,300 litres per second for a period of 1,000 years. As long as the amount of water taken out of an aquifer is equal or less than the inflow the water source is sustainable. In the kingdom the Sinai

aquifer may be replenished by water from the many rivers that will exist in Israel in the kingdom.

In the case of the Negev desert, it is possible that water from the temple will eventually flow into the Gulf of Aqaba watering the Negev on the way. However, this probably will not be water that has flowed out of the southern end of the Live Sea since we are told by Ezekiel that the southern section of the sea will be like the current Dead Sea.

Therefore there must be a river that flows south of Jerusalem to water the Negev which bypasses the Live Sea, as suggested by Ezekiel 47:8 “Then said he unto me, These waters issue out toward the east country, and go down into the desert [Arabah], and go into the sea: which being brought forth into the sea, the waters shall be healed.” For the purposes of this book, we will call this southern stream of water the *River Arabah*.

The River Arabah or one of its distributaries will turn the Valley of Achor from one of the driest places on earth to a place full of grazing flocks - Isaiah 65:10 “And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in ...” Today, the Achor Valley looks like a lunar landscape – not a good place for grazing flocks.

Another verse in Isaiah shows a direct link between the Great Earthquake and the appearance of streams of water – Isaiah 35:25 “And there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall.” The great slaughter is a clear reference to the battle of Armageddon and the falling towers a result of the Great Earthquake.

In terms of rainfall, the climate of Israel may not be much different from today. In Amos 9:14 we are informed that the Jews who return to the land of Israel at the beginning of the kingdom plant vineyards – Amos 9:14 “And I will bring again the captivity of my people Israel, and they shall build the waste cities, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards, and drink the wine thereof; they shall also make gardens, and eat the fruit of them.” Vines thrive in low rainfall areas close to rivers. This brings us back to the question of whether the changes that will take place to the environment of Israel will also be global.

For example, what about central Australia, one of the driest places on earth? What about the Sahara and Gobi deserts? To answer this question we should note that the prophets always spoke to an immediate audience; therefore the message always had some relevance to the people of Israel at the time of writing.

The people of Israel in Isaiah’s time would be familiar with the dry deserts of Judea and the Negev and would take the message of the prophet to mean that at some point in the future these deserts would become fertile. Therefore it is evident that the primary application of the prophecy is the land of Israel. As we will see later in this book, Israel will need to be greened to supply food to feed the extra people visiting Israel throughout the year.

It therefore follows that there will not be a global change to the environment in the kingdom apart from rolling back the environmental destruction of the last century or so. Of course, God could make the world a tropical paradise all over, even at the Poles if he wanted to. Personally, I don't think this will happen.

Places like the Poles and deserts have a beauty of their own and are full of life. There is an interesting article in National Geographic about the Mojave Desert in California (National Geographic January 1987, Volume 171, No. 1 Page 42). The article reports that people are reckless in the Mojave desert because they assume that it is dead and therefore it does not matter how they treat it - after all you can't make something already dead more dead! However, the Mojave Desert is home to a great diversity of animals and plants, which the dune buggies are ruining.

Changes to the animal kingdom

It is apparent that there will be major changes to the animal kingdom in the kingdom as we read in Isaiah 11:6-9 "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of an asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice' den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea."

There is some debate about whether these verses should be taken literally since some of these changes seem so far-fetched, for example a lion eating straw like an ox. It has been suggested that these verses are a metaphor for the peaceful coexistence of nations. In scripture, animals can be representative of nations, for example, the lion is a symbol of Assyria and a lamb a symbol of Israel. So, on this basis we could consider Isaiah 11 to be a parable of the nations at peace. However, the mention of a young child seems to suggest a more literal interpretation.

It has been suggested that the 'holy mountain' in Isaiah 11:9 refers to the vicinity of the temple mount in Jerusalem. If this were the case the environs of the temple would be like a safari park, which does not seem appropriate. We would have a situation where herbivorous lions would live in Israel and regular carnivorous lions elsewhere in the world such as the plains of Africa. If there can be straw eating lions in Israel then there can be straw-eating lions elsewhere in the world. God can modify the creation as he sees fit. Maybe this is not such a stretch since large herbivores do exist, for example the cow and the horse – the horse being the most powerful animal for its size.

Another clear implication of Isaiah 11:8 is that there will be no poisonous snakes in the kingdom. In the Garden of Eden, God cursed the serpent – Genesis 3:14 "And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou has done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life." This text implies that before it was cursed the serpent either had legs, wings, or both.

Several years ago, soon after Jane and I moved to Australia from the UK, we were on the way to a picnic site on the shores of Lake Baroon on the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, just north of where we live. We were driving down to the lake when what looked like a fat black snake about six foot long with legs walked across the road in front of the car. My mind immediately went to Genesis and the word “serpent” leapt into my mind. I later discovered that this animal was an iguana.

Today, it is true that all snakes travel on their belly, but they don’t eat dust. However, this may be the case in the kingdom as we read in Isaiah 65:25 “The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock; and dust shall be the serpents meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain.” Note that this verse applies to changes to the animal kingdom in the kingdom. This suggests that from the scriptural perspective serpents do not currently eat dust, but will do so in the future. Worms eat dirt so it is possible that snakes will also eat dirt in the kingdom.

In scripture licking the dust is used metaphorically, for example in Psalm 72:9 “They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him; and his enemies shall lick the dust.”, Isaiah 49:23 “And kings shall be thy nursing fathers, and their queens thy nursing mothers: they shall bow down to thee with their face toward the earth, and lick up the dust at the feet.”, Micah 7:17 “They shall lick dust like a serpent. All of these passages are about the kingdom.

The change to snakes can be considered to be the second part of the curse on the serpent in the Garden of Eden – part one being the removal of legs and or wings. On the spiritual plane this will mirror events in the kingdom when the nations will be restrained as prophesied in Revelation 20:1-3 “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years.” It seems apposite that a metaphorical serpent is bound in an earthen pit while real serpents eat dirt.

Changes to the animal kingdom will obviate the need for zoos and safari parks. Several years ago as a family we visited the Western Plains Zoo in Dubbo, NSW, Australia. Dubbo Zoo is effectively an African safari park transported to Australia. I was amazed when I saw two of my children standing close to some zebras. When I got closer I saw there was a fence hidden from view in a ditch. For a brief moment I had a vision of the kingdom.

6. Buildings

After the Great Earthquake, many buildings across the globe will lie in ruins and many cities rendered uninhabitable. A recent example of what might happen is New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina in 2005. It is likely that buildings in country areas will not be as damaged as much as in cities, and so will provide a haven for people escaping from city centres. No doubt much use will be made of tents with many populated regions of the world becoming vast refugee camps.

Being so close to the Mount of Olives, the epicentre of the earthquake, the city of Jerusalem, will no longer exist in its present form having being reduced to a pile of rubble. A priority after the Great Destruction will be clearing the debris from Jerusalem to make way for new civic construction especially the temple. As we saw earlier the whole topography of the area will be changed and the Mount of Olives will have completely gone and Mt. Zion elevated above the surrounding hills.

Since Jerusalem will be the capital city of the world, one of the first jobs in the kingdom will be to rebuild Jerusalem. Architects and builders will literally have a clean slate after the debris has been cleared. No doubt, even as the rubble is being cleared architects will be hard at work, maybe working in tents, to draw up plans for the new city. This will be a major task. It is possible that the saints will supervise mortal architects.

A world capital is an entirely new concept. We don't know exactly what it will be like, but I personally imagine there being an art gallery where people can go to see paintings of Bible scenes painted by inspired artists. I also image there being a library where people can go to find out what it was like to live in pre kingdom times. There will be numerous cafes and squares and shops and colleges for educating people in the ways of God.

What will be the architectural style of these new buildings? Will buildings be built from steel and glass like today? I personally think that the buildings of Jerusalem and other towns and villages will be constructed from stone as they were in the past. Stone is more durable than concrete and there are many examples of stone buildings that are much older than 1,000 years.

With a quieter pace of life in the kingdom there will be no need for the concentration of high rise buildings in cities. Stone buildings will be easier to construct after the collapse of the global economy, especially since they do not require tall cranes. In view of what we know of the character of Hiram, king of Tyre, it is possible that he will be in the kingdom. If he is, maybe he will oversee the acquisition of the materials for the reconstruction of Jerusalem. Some members Solomon's building teams may work closely together once again in the future. Hopefully, the trade of stone masonry, which has nearly died today, will be back in the kingdom.

In the record of the visit of the Queen of Sheba to Solomon we are told that she was amazed at what she saw – 2 Chronicles 7:3 “And when the Queen of Sheba has seen the wisdom of Solomon, and the house that he had built, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel; his cupbearers also, and their apparel; and his ascent by which he went up into the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her.”

In the Psalms we are told that kings who visit Jerusalem in the kingdom are going to be amazed at the wonderful architecture – Psalm 48:4-6 “For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together. They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled they hastened away.” The people that come to Jerusalem from all over the world to worship God will walk through the city and marvel at the buildings and go home to tell their grandchildren – Psalm 48:12 “Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.”

As the temple is being built, the new city of Jerusalem will also be under construction. From Psalm 48 it seems that the new city of Jerusalem will be built on the north side of Mount Zion – Psalm 48:1-2 “Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.”

We are told in Ezekiel 40 that there will be another city on the south side of the Holy Mountain – Ezekiel 40:2 “In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel, and set me upon a very high mountain, by which was as the frame of a city on the south.” The city that Ezekiel saw is the city of Yahweh Shamar. With Jerusalem on the north and Yahweh Shamar on the south there is a kind of balance.

An enormous amount of stone will be required for the building projects in Jerusalem and surrounding towns. From where is the stone going to come? The buildings of Jerusalem are famous for the high quality limestone used in their construction. Unsurprisingly this stone is known as *Jerusalem stone*. Today, the stone is supplied by the Jerusalem Stone Company. This company has quarries at two sites in Israel at Mitzpe Ramon in the Negev, and Galil region in the north of Israel. The company exports stone all over the world, especially the USA where there are two regional offices.

The city of Yahweh Shamar will be where the mortals will stay prior to going up to the temple. A better translation of Yahweh Shamar is *Yahweh Thither*. So the meaning of this name indicates that people will leave this city to go up to meet Yahweh. Throughout the Millennium this meeting will be through the mediation of the immortal priests but ultimately it is God's purpose meet men and women face to face in the future. We will explore this wonderful prospect in the last chapter of this book.

The rebuilding program

After the damage caused by the Great Earthquake, and associated aftershocks and tsunamis, there will be the need for a massive building program across the earth. There are a few verses in scripture enabling us to build a picture. Amos 9:11 – “In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old.” When we read the word *tabernacle* in scripture, we invariably think of *the* tabernacle constructed in Moses time.

Although the word here is the regular word for tabernacle, *cukkah* (5521), meaning hut, lair, booth, cottage, covert, pavilion, tabernacle, tent. We can see that in this context the word refers to Jerusalem where David lived. This verse suggests that the buildings in Jerusalem will be similar to David’s time and not built from steel and concrete like today.

A lot of Jews will be streaming into Israel from around the world to rebuild the old towns and cities. This building program is also described in Amos 9:14 quoted above and Isaiah 61:4 “And they shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities, the desolations of many desolations.” The new houses are likely to be substantially larger than they were in past times since each house will have a garden – a market garden. I imagine people having elaborate gardens with fountains powered by windmills etc.

On a personal note, one of the many things I’m looking forward to in the kingdom is visiting the towns and villages such as Bethel, Bethany and Bethphage and to see them as they were in the past. Of course these towns may not be exactly as they were in the past but at least they will be more like the past than the present – no cars, TV aerials and satellite dishes.

Cities in the kingdom

What about cities elsewhere in the world? In general, city life will not be prominent in the kingdom as indicated by Isaiah 32:19 “and the city shall be low in a low place” (margin: *low = utterly abased*). We all know that large cities are centres of crime. If people are in smaller communities crime will be less of a problem. Large cities require massive sewer systems and a place to get rid of the sewage. Small communities don’t need sewer systems – septic tank systems associated with individual houses can be used.

Residential housing

A verse in Isaiah suggests that high density housing won’t exist in the kingdom – Isaiah 5:8 “Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.” This is a difficult verse to decipher. At face value it appears to indicate that houses and land are packed closer and closer together so people can’t be alone anymore – in the Australian context this is like the difference between living in a city and the country – known as ‘acreage’ as properties are a few acres or larger. The NKJ supports this interpretation as it reads: “Woe to those who join house to house; They add field to field, Till there is no place Where they may dwell alone in the midst of the land!

It is likely that this verse is describing the situation of property investors collecting properties and packing in as many houses as possible. This goes on, for example in the inner suburbs of Brisbane where old houses are demolished and a block of units built on the same property.

In the kingdom people will build their own homes – Isaiah 65:21-22 “And they shall build houses, and inhabit them; and they shall plant vineyards and eat the fruit of them. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat: for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the works of their hands.” A friend who lives in Outback NSW once said to me “in the country you can live like a millionaire in a city”.

A number of years ago I used to regularly walk across Waterloo Bridge in London. Beneath the approach road on the South Bank of the Thames probably as many as a few hundred people lived in a place called *Cardboard City*. This was not an official title and I don't think you would not have been able to find it on any street map of London. This area beneath the concrete pillars that supported the approach road was called Cardboard City due to the number of people who lived here in cardboard boxes. These were people who had no place to call home in the conventional sense and are known by various names, e.g. generically as ‘homeless’, ‘down-and-outs’ in the UK and ‘derelicts’ in Australia.

One Christmas time I was walking through Cardboard City when I noticed that not all the citizens lived in cardboard boxes. Some lived in more elaborate structures such as wooden packing crates on wooden pallets. Some had scraps of carpet on the floor and strips of plastic hanging over the front serving as a door – like those screening freezer cabinets in supermarkets – in fact that's probably where they came from. As I was walking I noticed there was a clear pecking order. The alley containing actual cardboard boxes were separate from the ‘posh’ area where people lived in wooden boxes.

I had been through Cardboard City several times before, but for some reason this was the first time I'd noticed it. Maybe it was because the number of people living here had increased at this time as it was winter. That afternoon, back at work at St. Thomas' Hospital I mentioned my observations to a colleague who informed me that a TV program had actually referred to the pecking order in Cardboard City. The lesson is that even down at the level of Cardboard City where the poorest people of the city live there are those who are better off than others.

I once took an Australian friend to see Cardboard city – not high on the list of tourist attractions of London. However, I was surprised when at the end of the day my friend told me that the visit to Cardboard City had been the high-light of the trip. Cardboard City even trumped the British Museum! Cardboard City has now gone and has been replaced by an IMAX theatre.

A few months after my Cardboard City experience, I read an article about the price of houses in Hollywood, California. At the time of writing a house at the top of the hill cost the equivalent of 20 million pounds sterling whereas a house at the bottom would set you back one million pounds. This is an enormous price differential. In Australia you probably would not be able to find a suburb in which prices varied by a factor of 20 (e.g. \$200,000 to \$4 million). In the case

of Hollywood if you live at the bottom of the hill you are poor compared to those who live at the top – assuming house value is a reliable indicator of the wealth of the residents – which it usually is.

Several years ago I read an article in National Geographic about Silicon Valley. Paradoxically, there are a large number of working people, even two-income families who are homeless due to lack of affordable housing. Recently, in 2015 I saw a photo essay on the CNN website about exactly the exact same problem, so in the 30 years or so since publication of the National Geographic article there clearly has been no improvement in the situation.

We can be absolutely certain that there will be less crime in the kingdom. A major contributor to the reduction in crime will probably be the absence of huge cities. In small country communities people tend to know each other and notice strangers. Crime, riots, demonstrations etc. invariably occur in cities.

People will be much more secure in the kingdom. It would be really great if keys could be dispensed with. In 1998 I was visiting Longreach in Western Queensland where someone told me that they can go on holiday for a month, not lock the house and everything is there when they come back. This would be unthinkable in a city.

Cities are certainly not safe places for children. When Joseph and Mary inadvertently left Jesus behind in Jerusalem the first day he was missing they didn't bother looking as they assumed he was travelling back with friends. When my children were little I would have panicked if I hadn't seen them for one minute in a busy shopping centre.

Today, status is very much linked to the sort of house you live in. Rich people tend to live in much bigger houses than poor people, as discussed above. In the western world, peoples' aspirations have been expanding. In 2004 I attended a lecture given by Prof. Ian Lowe, emeritus professor of Environmental Science at Griffith University. He made the observation that 25 years ago in Brisbane people aspired to have a three bedroom house and a car. Now the going rate in Brisbane is a five bedroom house that includes a home cinema, a caravan jet skis (a kind of aquatic motor bike). We can be sure that if things go on people will want even more and a five bedroom house will be looked upon as a hovel!

The following verse suggests that in the kingdom people will live in much smaller, agricultural communities and not in large cities – Isaiah 32:19 “When it shall hail, coming down on the forest; and the city shall be low in a low place.” The first “low” in this verse is a translation of the Hebrew word *shaphel* (8213), which means *to abase*, and the second “low” a translation of *shaphelah* (8219) that is generally used to describe the coastal plain of Israel. This does not mean that all cities will be situated in valleys, or in the Shaphela, but rather that city life will not be prominent in the kingdom.

7. The temple

Now that we have discussed the re-building of Jerusalem and surrounding towns at the beginning of the kingdom, we now turn our attention to the temple, which will be the most important building in the world and centre of the kingdom. Rather than concentrating on the architectural details we will focus on the purpose of the temple and try to imagine the experience of people visiting the temple.

An architect's plan in words

Ezekiel chapters 40 to 47 are in essence an architect's plan in words for a building that does not yet exist, but will in the future. We cannot know for sure exactly what the temple will look like, but we do know it will be consistent with the description given in Ezekiel.

To illustrate this, imagine that two builders are given the same plans for a house and told to build how they want so long as it is consistent with the plan. The builders are free to choose the bricks, roof tiles, windows, paint and landscape the garden how they want. The two houses will probably look quite different and it would not be immediately obvious that they were both built from the same plan, especially if the orientation and landscaping were different. Therefore there are a range of possibilities for how the temple will look that will be consistent with the description in Ezekiel.

The timing of Ezekiel's vision

In our imagination, let us go back to Ezekiel's time and look over his shoulder as he is given a visionary tour of the temple. When Ezekiel received his vision, he was exiled in Babylon with his fellow Jews. We are given very specific details of the timing in Ezekiel 40:1 "In the five and twentieth year of our captivity, in the beginning of the year, in the tenth day of the month, in the fourteenth year after that the city was smitten, in the selfsame day the hand of the LORD was upon me, and brought me thither." Is this timing information significant?

Ezekiel was exiled to Babylon in 597 BC, so the 25th year of the captivity is 573 BC. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, destroyed the temple in 587 BC, so the 14th year after the destruction is 573 BC. Was 573 BC a significant date? Let us investigate further. The longest prophetic rule in scripture is the seven times of the book of Daniel that represents $7 \times 360 = 2,520$ prophetic day. On the day-for-a-year principle 2,520 days is equal to 2,520 years.

When we add 2,520 years to 573 BC we arrive at AD 1948, the year that the state of Israel was established – *the* major sign of the impending return of Jesus and a major stepping-stone in God's plan to make Jerusalem the capital city of the world and site of the "house of prayer for all people". Ezekiel received his temple vision at the end of a series of visions that began in c. 597 BC during the fifth year of king Jehoiachin's captivity (Ezekiel 1:2), a decade before the destruction of the temple.

In Ezekiel's prophecy we gain a fascinating insight into the how God inspired men to write what they did through the power of the Holy Spirit. In Ezekiel 40:2 we read: "In the visions of God brought he me into the land of Israel and set me upon a very high mountain." In this particular text we are not specifically told that Ezekiel was given the vision through the Holy Spirit, but we are told later that the vision was orchestrated by God's spirit in Ezekiel 43:5 "So the spirit took me up, and brought me into the inner court."

Ezekiel's tour of the temple

When God gave Ezekiel a vision of the future temple, Ezekiel never actually left Babylon. Let's try to imagine Ezekiel's experience. Ezekiel would have been very excited to be 'going home' from Babylon and fascinated to see what his country and city of Jerusalem were going to look like in the future.

As Ezekiel arrived above the land of Israel he had a panoramic view across Israel in the future. He descended towards a mountain and on the southern side he saw a city. This must have been prominent in Ezekiel's field of vision and much larger than the smaller villages and towns that will be there in the future. The description of this "frame of a city" to the south of the mountain is most probably the city of Jerusalem, since in Psalm 48:2 we read that the holy mountain is on the northern side of the city. Ezekiel descended and arrived on Mount Zion.

Ezekiel is greeted by a man not entirely human - Ezekiel 40:3 "And he brought me thither his hand, and a measuring reed; and he stood in the gate." The impression we gain from this description is that the man is not a flesh and blood man with bronzed skin but rather a man who looks as if he has been made from solid brass. In scripture brass is in fact bronze, an alloy of copper and tin. Modern brass is an alloy of copper and zinc.

Ezekiel's guide gives us an insight into the nature of the Holy Spirit. There are various views. At one extreme the Holy Spirit is considered to be identical to God and Jesus, i.e. the third person of a trinity. At the opposite scale the Holy Spirit is conceived as an inanimate force. The bronze man, whom we will call the *Surveyor*, is a person generated by the Holy Spirit through whom God speaks to Ezekiel during the temple tour. The Holy Spirit controls the nerve impulses in Ezekiel's brain so he appears to travel from Babylon to Israel and walk through the temple.

Those of us who dream, or at least remember our dreams, know that our brains are capable of generating realistic 'visions' of people who do not exist. In the case of Ezekiel, the Holy Spirit activated the nerves in Ezekiel's visual cortex and the sensory cortex – the part of brain that receives signals from the arms and legs. However, the signals to the motor cortex were cut off, so that Ezekiel didn't actually move during the vision. This occurs in regular dreaming so that we don't move in our sleep (except for sleep walking). A type of dreaming exists called lucid dreaming, in which everything appears realistic, almost as if you are awake. In Ezekiel's case the dream so lucid it was indistinguishable from reality.

Ultimately, the Holy Spirit is a conscious intelligence rather than an intelligent but unconscious spiritual ‘computer’ – in modern terminology an advanced artificial intelligence computer program. We are led to the conclusion that the Holy Spirit is the action of an ‘anonymous’ angel. A good example of this is in the book of Revelation where we are told that the message of the book of Revelation was transmitted from God to Jesus to John by an angel – Revelation 1:2 “The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John.”

The message of the book of Revelation is prophetic, as we read in Revelation 22:19 “And if any man shall take away from the words of this prophecy...” This links with 2 Peter 1:21 “...prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” This of course applies to all of scripture.

Ezekiel is instructed to carefully observe all that the Surveyor shows and tells him. However, this is not just a technical exercise as Ezekiel is told to take to heart what he sees and hears. In other words, God intends this tour to have an emotional impact on Ezekiel – an emotional impact he is to pass on to his compatriots when he’s back from the future. God clearly wanted his exiled people to look beyond their present everyday experience in Babylon to a time when they would be back in the land when Israel is the spiritual focus of the whole Earth. Since the scriptures are for the benefit for all, God clearly intends this prophecy to have an emotional impact on *us* as well.

The Surveyor walks into the temple and places his measuring reed (about 12 feet in length) against walls, steps and posts. Note that Ezekiel does not actually write anything during the tour. If this were the case, at the end of the vision, Ezekiel’s writing tablet would have to be transformed from virtual to physical reality. Although of course God could have ensured that the vision was recorded in this way, he did not do so. God used a more efficient process. Ezekiel was able to remember all the intricate details and write them when back in reality. This gives us a direct insight into the kind of memories the angels have, which can look forward to having in the kingdom.

Why was Ezekiel shown so much detail? Why did God want the exiled Jews in Babylon to know all this detail? Why does God want us to know this detail? One answer might be that the inclusion of so much detail makes the building seem more real. It indicates that a detailed plan exists sufficient for the building to be constructed. Nowadays, a complete building can be constructed inside a computer enabling photo realistic images to be generated. The pictures are often so realistic that often it seems as if the building already exists. This is what it was like for Ezekiel.

A particular highlight of Ezekiel’s tour is when he sees God’s glory enter via the eastern gate and arrive in the central precinct of the temple. In scripture, the sunrise is a metaphor for the return of Jesus to the Earth, and ultimately a metaphor for the arrival of God on the Earth at the end of the kingdom. To fully understand the vision of the arrival of God’s glory in the temple

we need to briefly consider the departure of God's glory from the first temple known as Solomon's temple. Although we talk in terms of Solomon's temple and Ezekiel's temple of course in each case the temple is God's.

God's glory leaves the temple

In the earlier chapters, Ezekiel prophesies of the departure of God's glory from the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Jesus acted out the departure of God's glory at the end of his ministry just two days before his crucifixion. Jesus had just inspected the temple and been upset by what he saw, and as a result went across the Kidron Valley to the Mount of Olives to take stock.

With his disciples next to him, Jesus turned to face the city and looked out across the future to when he would return as king of the world. The words of Jesus are recorded in what is known as the Olivet Prophecy in Matthew 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21 (for more details see the eBook *Prophecies of Precision*). Six weeks later Jesus ascended from the Mount of Olives as the immortalised Son of God. When we place these two events end-to-end – Jesus' exit from the temple and ascension to heaven – we have a cameo of the exile of the glory of God in Ezekiel's time.

A key verse is Ezekiel 43:7 "And he said unto me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile, neither they, nor their kings; by their whoredom, nor by the carcasses of their kings in their high places."

The reason God wanted Ezekiel to show the detailed plans of the house to the exiled Jews is to make them ashamed. Ezekiel 43:10 "Thou son of man, shew the house to the house of Israel, that they may be ashamed of their iniquities: and let them measure the pattern". Note here that God speaks of the house as if it already exists – and of course from God's perspective the temple does already exist in the sense that when God says something will happen it is absolutely certain it will happen.

How could the vision make the people ashamed? Let's imagine for the moment that we've been forcefully relocated to another country with a different language, culture and religion. For example, imagine being moved to Kolkata in India. (If you happen to live in Kolkata, imagine being moved to Moscow). Most of us would deeply resent being moved to a foreign country against our will with no immediate prospect of return. The Jews of Ezekiel's day were upset at being exiled to Babylon. Four hundred years before the exile, King David prophesied that the people would sit down to weep by the rivers of Babylon – Psalm 137:1 "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion."

As the people wept, some would have contemplated the reason why they now found themselves in Babylon. The core reason for their exile was the nation had exiled God from their lives. God had exiled them to try and get them to see sense. Although the people were in a state of spiritual ruin God gave them the opportunity to repent and at some point in the future return

home and be part of a regenerated nation. Ezekiel's divinely appointed commission was to stand beside the people near the River Chebar in Babylon and convey this message of hope.

The people were given a wonderful vision of the future when God himself would be present in the land of Israel. God gave them a time limit through the writings of the prophet Jeremiah who said that the people would languish in exile for 70 years (for more details see *Prophecies of Precision*), although probably very few knew this. We get the impression in Daniel 9 that the prophet Daniel was one of the few people (perhaps the only person) who knew the 70 years was about to run its course and it was now time for the people to return.

When the vision was delivered to the people in Babylon, the temple had been destroyed 14 years before. No doubt there was a great deal of sadness and despair when news of the destruction arrived with the third wave of exiles. Now it would seem a hopeless situation with no point in going back home now that the temple was destroyed.

However, the message of hope presented by God through Ezekiel was that the destroyed temple would be rebuilt, although it would be bigger with an expanded role, and the presence of God would ensure protection against invasion by foreign powers. The prophecy of Ezekiel Israel was to become the premier nation on earth and the temple was to be a house of prayer for all people – Isaiah 56:7 “Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for my house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

It is apparent on reading the record in Ezekiel that animal sacrifices will be offered in the kingdom, in a similar fashion as under the Law of Moses in OT times. At first sight we might think that this is a bit ‘retro’ and primitive. We are told by the Apostle Paul in the NT that the purpose of the law was to introduce people to the Lord Jesus Christ – Galatians 3:24 “...the law was a schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ...”. The law of the temple will perform the same purpose as the law given to Moses but on a global scale.

A connection between the Law of Moses and the “law of the house” (Ezekiel 43:12) is borne out by the many allusions to the law in Ezekiel. For example, fire comes down from heaven to consume the sacrifices placed on the large platform on top of the mountain, indicating acceptance of the sacrifice. Fire consumed the sacrifices presented at the inauguration of the Tabernacle and fire consumed the sacrifices in the time of Elijah.

The water issuing from under the altar on top of the mountain is reminiscent of the rock in the wilderness that was a source of water for the people and their flocks. The rock in the wilderness represented Jesus – 1 Corinthians 10:4 “...for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ”. The altar in the temple is called the “Lion of God”, which links with Jesus as “the lion of the tribe of Judah”. Revelation 7:7 switches to another title of Jesus “the lamb of God”: “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters...” and also John 4:14 “But whosoever

drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.”

Water will flow out of the rock in the centre of the temple supplying the whole land of Israel. Ultimately the water flows into the oceans of the world representing God’s teaching flowing out from Jerusalem to all the world, (Deuteronomy 32:3,4, Isaiah 43:10,11,20).

Jesus leaves the temple

The most unique feature of the future temple will be the central building, which will effectively be part of heaven. Only immortal beings can stand in the direct presence of God (1 Timothy 6:16) and so only immortal beings will be allowed in to the central circular area of the temple. Using reverse logic; if only immortal beings are allowed into the central precinct it implies God’s presence. However, God will not be personally present in this area until the end of the kingdom.

God’s presence has been on this earth in the past, principally in the most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and Solomon’s temple where the Ark of the Covenant resided. At some point the Ark of the Covenant was removed. There are many theories about the fate of the Ark of the Covenant after it was removed from the temple. However, it is certain it had gone by the time the temple was destroyed in 587 BC. We have a connection between removal of the ark from the temple and the ascension of Jesus to heaven.

In the years preceding the destruction of the temple at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar in 587 BC, Ezekiel prophesied that the glory of God would depart from the temple in stages. After the temple was destroyed, Ezekiel turned his attention to the future and prophesied of the return of God’s glory to the temple.

Just two days before he was crucified, Jesus visited the temple for the last time and then went across to the Mount of Olives with his disciples. This is paralleled in Ezekiel 11:23 “And the glory of the LORD went up from the midst of the city, and stood upon the mountain which is on the east side of the city.” This foreshadowed Jesus leaving the temple and city and arriving at the Mount of Olives. When Jesus arrived on the Mount of Olives, he turned to face the city and prophesied of the impending destruction of the temple, which actually occurred in AD 70. Jesus told his disciples that he would return in “power and great glory” (Luke 21:27).

In Ezekiel’s prophecy the glory departs and then returns. Jesus’ departure from the temple parallels the departure of the glory from the temple. Therefore, if we extend the analogy into the future, the return of Jesus to the Earth parallels the glory returning in Ezekiel. For more details of this parallel, please refer to the chapter on the Olivet Prophecy in *Prophecies of Precision*. Ultimately, the vision is about the return of God to the earth that we will discuss more extensively in the last chapter of this book.

The central building of the temple is three stories high with a diameter of 2,220 cubits, or 1,193 m (3,977 ft). In this book we will not enter into the argument of whether the central building is

round or square but presume whatever shape it is it encompasses the central mountain, which has the altar on top. The central area is known as the Most Holy place and the area outside but within the building called the Separate Place. It is possible that the mountain in the centre of the temple will be similar to many of the volcanic plugs that exist in various parts of the world today, for example, the Glass House Mountains close to where I live in South East Queensland.

One of the mountains is Tibrogargan with a peak 264 m high. The mountain would fit into a circle 500 m in diameter and therefore is probably comparable in size to the mountain encompassed by the central precinct of the temple. Moreton Bay Island, about 45 km away across Moreton Bay can easily be seen from the peaks of the Glass House Mountains.

Jerusalem is about 50 km inland from the Mediterranean Sea. When Mount Zion is elevated after the Great Earthquake, we would easily be able to see the west coast of Israel extending up to Haifa. We would be able to see ships arriving with people going up to Jerusalem and leaving for home. The snow-tipped peaks of Mount Hermon would be seen rising out of the blue haze on the northern horizon, and the mountains on the eastern banks of the Dead Sea. To the south we would see all the way down to Ezion Geber at the top of the Red Sea.

The temple will be visible from a distance of several tens of km. It is possible that when fire comes down to consume the sacrifices it will be visible below the horizon – a bit like seeing lightning from a distant thunderstorm. People will no doubt experience a certain amount of stress as they approach the temple. They will be approaching a small area of the earth that is effectively a part of heaven on earth – God’s footstool!

Let’s try to imagine how a typical Jew might have reacted to hearing Ezekiel’s account of the vision. They might assume that Ezekiel had actually visited the building since the description seems so real. As an analogy, imagine someone telling you about their new house. They tell you that there is a tiled path to the door and then there are five steps up to a blue door. If someone is this specific, either the house has been built *or* detailed plans have been drawn up. In other words, the message of the vision given to Ezekiel is that this temple actually exists in the mind of God and therefore it is absolutely certain it will be built.

The temple contains much spiritual iconography. For example there are carved palm trees that represent an upright way of life. Real palm trees grow vertically towards the sky. Spiritual palm trees grow towards heaven without bending down to earthly thinking. Psalm 90:212 “The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.”

Palm trees also represent the Gentiles, as demonstrated in Exodus 15: 27 “And they came to Elim, where were twelve wells of water, and threescore and ten palm trees; and they encamped there by the waters.” The 12 wells represent Israel in the kingdom and the 70 palm trees the nations. Since the temple is a house of prayer for all people, the palm tree is an apposite decoration.

It is significant that Ezekiel was given his vision in a Jubilee Year on the tenth day of the first month, which was the preparation of the Passover (Exodus 12:1-3). Ultimately, the temple is about the great exodus from death to life.

The man of brass who takes Ezekiel on the tour of the temple represents God manifest in the flesh. In scripture, brass is often used to represent flesh, i.e. the mortal human condition. For example, when many of the Israelites were bitten by poisonous snakes in the wilderness, Moses was instructed to manufacture a brass serpent that the people had to look at to be saved from death. This is clearly symbolic of Jesus, the perfect embodiment of God in the flesh.

The size of the building is 500 reeds on a side, the reed being six cubits, about 12 feet long. If the cubit being used in Ezekiel is the Royal Cubit of 21.5 inches, this makes the building just over 1.6 km on each side, i.e. about an English mile. This is a big building!

The 'law of the house' is that people pass through the house in one direction. If they enter from the north they pass all the way through and exit via the south and *vice versa*. Each gate is 40 feet wide 100 feet long and 26 feet high. Ezekiel walked through the gate into the temple with sunlight streaming through a glass roof and vines intertwined in a wickerwork structure. On passing through the gate he saw an avenue 200 feet wide running the length of the house in either direction. Maybe Ezekiel imagined people streaming in and out of the temple on his tour.

It is apparent from a verse in Isaiah that the temple will be a living building in the sense of being covered with foliage "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious" (Isaiah 60:13).

Notice that this verse echoes Ezekiel 43:7 in saying that the temple will be a place for God's feet. This will be in fulfilment of Isaiah 66:1 "Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool:" As we saw, the very centre of the temple will be in effect heaven on earth in which God is present. Not completely, but in a footstool sense. God himself will not come back to the earth until the end of the kingdom as we shall see in the penultimate chapter.

When people pass through the outer court and arrive at the steps into the central circular building they will see multiple large carvings of two-headed cherubim with a lion face on one side and a human face on the other. These cherubim represent the interface between mortality and immortality. The face of the man represents the human condition and the lion, the lion of the tribe of Judah, the immortal Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus is *the* interface between God and man (1Timothy 2:5). These gates are the real 'gates of heaven', beyond is the precinct of the eternal. Between each head will be a central column like a palm tree representing natural and spiritual Israel respectively.

Isaiah informs us that a permanent cloud will exist above the altar of the temple. "And the LORD will create upon every dwelling place of mount Zion, and upon her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flame of fire by night: for upon all the glory shall be a

defence. And there shall be a tabernacle for a shadow in the daytime for the heat, and for a place of refuge, and for a covert from storm and from rain.” (Isaiah 4:5-6).

This is of course reminiscent of the pillar of cloud that led the children of Israel from Egypt to the Promised Land. In essence, the cloud above the temple is the wilderness cloud that has reached its final destination. Although the cloud does not move in the kingdom, the exodus from death to life is still going on.

Arriving at the temple

What will it be like for people arriving at the temple? Since the temple will be the most important building in the world no doubt there will be quite a wide buffer zone around it – probably extensive parklands. Close up, the walls will seem enormous. Anyone arriving in the middle will see the corner towers 800 m to the left and right. When people reach the walls of the temple they will have to prepare themselves to wade through water of varying depths, the only exception being babies and old people, mostly at the beginning of the kingdom, who need to be carried across.

Jeremiah gives us the precise location of the temple in “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that the city shall be built to the LORD from the tower of Hananeel unto the gate of the corner. And the measuring line shall yet go forth over against it upon the hill Gareb, and shall compass about Goath. And the whole valley of the dead bodies, and of the ashes, and all the fields unto the brook of Kidron, unto the corner of the horse gate toward the east, shall be holy unto the LORD; it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.” (Jeremiah 31:38-40). Here we have a surveyors map in words telling us where the temple will be in relation to the Jerusalem in Old Testament times.

As people look up to the altar that they will see a stream falling down the side of the central mountain. Maybe in places the stream will be more like a waterfall due to the steepness, with spray glinting in the sunlight where water hits the rocks. The source of the water is beneath the altar. Somehow the water will be directed to the northern and southern sides of the temple where it will flow out of tunnels spaced at regular intervals at the base of the wall. The northern and southern streams will get progressively deeper as they flow east along the walls. This means that visitors to the temple will have to cross water on entering and leaving the temple since people can only enter and leave via the northern and southern gates.

We might think that surely that one or more bridges would be a more convenient form of access to the temple. From a purely human point of view it would be, but in this case mortal people are getting close to the ‘gates of heaven’, and therefore divine thinking is in the design. Jesus said “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out and shall find pasture.” (John 10:9). God has decreed that people must wade through water to enter the temple.

Once again we are brought back to the Exodus where Israel went through the Red Sea to enter the wilderness and then through the River of Jordan to enter the Promised Land. Today people

must be baptised through immersion in water to be saved. Noah and his family were surrounded by water in their exodus from the old world to the new. So, on entering the temple people will undergo a form of baptism.

When people visit the temple it will be a cameo of Israel traveling from Egypt to the Promised Land via the Sinai desert. Entering the house by passing through the southern (or northern) stream is analogous to leaving Egypt and entering the wilderness. Presenting their sacrifices and seeing them consumed on the mount is analogous to Israel at Sinai, and passing through the northern (or southern) stream analogous to passing through the River Jordan into the Promised Land. The people travel back to their home land and pass on their experience to others that have not yet travelled to the temple.

As people approach, in the distance in either direction they will see the corner towers 40 reeds or 480 feet high and 360 feet square with smoke drifting out of rooftop chimneys from the ovens in the kitchens below – Ezekiel 46:22 “In the four corners of the court *there were* courts joined of forty *cubits* long and thirty broad: these four corners were one measure.” In the margin of the Oxford Bible a note translates *joined* as *made with chimneys*.

The kitchens in these four corner towers will cook meat and bake bread that will be continuously convey hot food to the dining halls on the western, northern and southern sides of the building. It is quite possible that the temple kitchens will never actually close in the kingdom, i.e. in today's vernacular open 24/7 for a thousand years.

The mortal population who will visit the temple will present animals for sacrifice to saints stationed at the gates of the central circular building. The saints will walk up steps on the side of the mountain and place the sacrifice on the altar. No doubt for efficiency several sacrifices will be placed on the altar at the same time. After a certain number have been placed on the altar, if the sacrifice are accepted fire will descend from the sky to ignite the sacrifices.

Lack of fire will signify rejection of one of the sacrifices. Imagine the extreme tension in amongst the group of presenters when this happens! The question on everyone's mind will be “am I the culprit?” The offending sacrifice will be removed and the offender removed from the congregation to suffer the consequences. Imagine the relief of those present when fire does finally descend indicating acceptance. They will then be able to relax in one of the restaurants for a celebratory meal.

The pillar of cloud will exist above the central mount will exclude bad weather from the temple so there will never be a time when sacrifices cannot be presented. Access to God will be available 24/7. The same cloud will provide illumination at night which again suggests a 24-hour operation.

Thus far, we have been considering the spiritual experience of mortal people from all over the world visiting the temple. The temple will of course have to cater for more mundane needs, so a lot of toilets and nappy changing facilities will be required close to the dining halls, as is the

case in almost all eating establishments today. Since access to the temple is through the streams it would be rather inconvenient taking a two year old to a toilet outside of the temple half way through a meal.

In yet another connection with the wilderness wanderings when people visit the temple they will be keeping the Feast of Tabernacles – “And it shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.” (Zechariah 14:16).

The reason that the children of Israel were enjoined to keep Feast of Tabernacles was to remember their temporary accommodation in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:39-42). In the kingdom, the mortal population will be on a journey – a journey from death to life, and keeping the Feast of Tabernacles will remind people of this. When the Israelites kept the Feast of Tabernacles they left their permanent homes and lived in temporary booths made from palm fronds etc.

When people keep the Feast of Tabernacles in the kingdom they will be reminded of the ‘old’ Feast of Tabernacles by the permanent foliage in the temple. Maybe they will dine under a natural canopy of vines intertwined into the roof of the dining halls. Grape vines might be used, as suggested by Ezekiel 41:16 “The door posts, and the narrow windows, and the galleries round about on their three stories, over against the door, ceiled with wood round about, and from the ground up to the windows, and the windows were covered;”

Henry Sulley in his book *The Temple of Ezekiel’s prophecy* (available on Google Books) suggests that the best Hebrew translation of “cieled with wood” in the KJV is *thin trees* – i.e. vines, which are literally thin trees. The rest of the verse supports this as vines would grow from the ground up to the windows.

Henry Sulley has suggested that the vintage from vines in the temple will provide wine for visitors to the temple. This is suggested by Isaiah 25:6 “And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things of wines on the lees well refined.” Lees are the dead yeast cells that collect at the bottom of wine as fermentation proceeds. The wine above the lees is drawn off at the end of the wine making process. The term “wines on the lees” suggests that wine production will occur in or proximate to the temple. Clearly with the 24/7 operation of the temple wine production will need to be enormous.

The precinct of the temple will be known for a profusion of trees – Isaiah 60:13 “The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.”

At the entrances to the central building will be thrones of judgment where the saints will judge moral supplicants. In total there will be 389 thrones. Details of the activity that will take place at these thrones is revealed in Psalm 122:1-5 “I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem is

built as a city that is compact together: Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD. For there are set thrones of judgement, the thrones of the house of David.”

In the kingdom the saints will have the dual role of kings and priests, or king-priests – Revelation 5:10 “And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.” We have spoken about the central building being the interface between heaven and earth. Some mortal beings will be allowed into the outer chambers of this building but under carefully controlled conditions.

Mortal Levites will serve in this building, but before they do so they will have to change into special linen garments – maybe a bit like medical staff getting changed before going into an operating theatre. This will teach people that they must be clothed with righteousness to approach God. The role of the mortal Levites will be to prepare sacrifices presented to them by the people. The mortal Levites will then pass the sacrifices on to the saints, known collectively as the immortal sons of Zadok, who will then carry the prepared sacrifices up to the altar.

An interesting question is who are the Sons of Zadok? To understand the full significance of the priestly orders in the future we need to briefly look at the history of the priesthood. High priests were descended from Aaron. Aaron had two sons Ithamar and Eleazar. Initially the high priestly line went through Ithamar but in the days of Eli, due to the depravity of Eli’s sons Hophni and Phineas, God transferred the line from the descendants of Ithamar to the descendants Eleazar.

The switch actually occurred in the reign of Solomon. Eli’s descendent, Abiathar, was high priest during the reign of King David but defected to David’s son Adonijah at the end of David’s reign. Solomon, who succeeded David as king of Israel, removed Abiathar as the high priest and installed Zadok, thus fulfilling the prophecy.

Prior to the transition in the priesthood, God gave an interesting prophecy to Phineas, one of the descendants of Eleazar that we read in Numbers 25:11-13 “Phineas, the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, hath turned my wrath away from the children of Israel, while he was zealous for my sake among them, that I consumed not the children of Israel in my jealousy. Wherefore say, Behold, I give unto him my covenant of peace: And he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood; because he was zealous for his God, and made an atonement for the children of Israel.” This is a reference to the immortal order of the Melchisedec priesthood.

Zadok was a priest who became a high priest after Eli in the time of David. Are the sons of Zadok the literal resurrected sons of Zadok? No doubt some of the sons of Zadok will be immortal priests, however, it appears that the term “sons of Zadok” can be applied generically to any saint officiating in the temple in the kingdom. Jesus is described as being a “high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Hebrews 6:20) and since the saints are unified with

Jesus (Galatians 3:28 “ye are all one in Christ Jesus”) they also share in the Melchizedek priesthood.

This Melchizedek order is different from the Levitical order in many important respects. The most significant difference is that one group is mortal and the other immortal. Another difference is that the Melchizedek order combines the role of king and priest (Revelation 5:10). In OT times the role of king and priest was never combined, a separation that was assured by Levites always being from the tribe of Levi and kings from the tribe of Judah.

The meaning of the name Melchizedek is given in Hebrews 7:1-2 “For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is king of peace.”

In the temple, sacrifices will be accepted by fire as was the case in the past when a sacrifice was presented by Aaron for the nation: Leviticus 9:24 “And there came fire out from before the LORD, and consumed upon the altar the burnt offering and the fat: which when all the people saw, they shouted, and fell on their faces.”

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron offered the wrong kind of sacrifices and were themselves consumed by fire – Leviticus 10:1-2 “And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD.”

A similar fate awaits those who offer unacceptable sacrifices in the kingdom – Isaiah 66:23-24 “And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the LORD. And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcases of the men that have transgressed against me: for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.”

This punishment may seem very harsh, but we need to bear in mind that in the kingdom everyone will know about God and the expected standard of behaviour will be much higher than today. At the moment God allows sin to have its course and people largely go unpunished. In the kingdom that will not be the case.

No doubt there will be some who come up to Jerusalem who have committed adultery – they might think that with the thousands of people pouring into the temple God is not going to know about their indiscretion committed months or maybe even years ago. Maybe they will have a chance to repent of their sin before travelling to the temple, but won’t avail themselves of the opportunity as they think they can get away with it, but at the temple it will be too late.

After people’s visit to the temple it will be time to go home or at least relax and view the magnificent buildings of the city of Jerusalem, and maybe visit some of the other cities in Israel

of Biblical significance such as Bethel, Beer Sheba etc. Psalm 48 gives us an insight into ‘tourism’ in the kingdom age – Psalm 48:12-13 “Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generations following.” Clearly, visiting Jerusalem will be a unique experience.

8. Travel in the kingdom

When the Great Earthquake occurs and civilisation as we know it collapses it will not be possible for most people to travel very far. The first major shift of people will be the return of the Jews to Jerusalem, often known as the *Elijah Mission*.

The Elijah mission

Soon after the return of Jesus, Elijah will travel across the globe to gather the Jews to their homeland as the clean-up operation proceeds in Israel. At the moment, most of the world's Jews, about 20 million, live outside Israel. Until the massive exodus from Russia in the last few years, there were more Jews in New York (about 3 million) than in Israel.

In scripture, the return of the Jews at the beginning of the kingdom is compared to the exodus from Egypt – Ezekiel 20:34-38 “And I will bring you out from the people, and I will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered, with a mighty hand, and with a stretched out arm, and with fury poured out. And I will bring you into the wilderness of the people, and there will I plead with you face to face. Like as I pleaded with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so will I plead with you, saith the Lord GOD.” The exodus from the nations could take as long as the first: Micah 7:15 “According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things.”

How will the Jews return home? British ships were used to convey Jews to Israel after the proclamation of the state of Israel in 1948, and there is scriptural evidence to suggest British ships will once again transport Jews back to Israel. An advantage of ships over aircraft is that more people and cargo can be carried at one time.

As well as bringing Jews back to Israel the ships of Tarshish are going to transport resources to Jerusalem to kick-start the economy on the kingdom – Isaiah 60:9 “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy One of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.”

We will not get into the argument over whether Britain is Tarshish, although from my own research into this I think the evidence is very strong. Tarshish is a major trading maritime power, which narrows the possibilities to just a few nations, and the best fit is Britain.

Travel to and from Jerusalem

At some point at the beginning of the kingdom a command will be issued for people to travel to Jerusalem to worship God at the “house of prayer for all people”. This command will be issued soon after peace has been established across the whole world - Zechariah 14:16-19 “And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the

feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.”

These verses clearly indicate that travel to and from Jerusalem will be mandatory, i.e. nations will not be able to opt out. The importance that God will place on travel to and from Jerusalem is further underlined by Isaiah 60:11-12 “Therefore thy gates shall be open continually: they shall not be shut day nor night; that men might bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought. For the nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish; yea those nations shall be utterly wasted.” The last part of this verse reinforces the message of Zechariah 14:19 that nations who refuse to go up to Jerusalem will not receive any rain.

Why will people be required to go to all the effort to travel to and from Jerusalem? There are a number of reasons, one is to learn about God and his ways - Isaiah 2:3 “And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.” Of course spiritual education will occur all over the world at all times, but there will be something extra people will learn by going up to Jerusalem.

Another key reason for travelling to Jerusalem is to worship God in prayer and the offering of sacrifices, as we are told in Isaiah 56:7 “Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer: their burnt offerings and my sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people.”

Another interesting question is why it will be necessary for people to take probably several months out of their lives to travel across the world to worship God at Jerusalem? Surely it would be far easier for people to worship where they are. At the present time we know that it doesn't matter where we worship God – it could be in a hall, in a home, in the middle of a desert or on top of a mountain. So why will it be different in the kingdom? People will of course worship God on a daily basis wherever they happen to live in the world, however there is this extra requirement to physically to travel to Jerusalem.

We can consider the journey of people from all over the world to Jerusalem to be a parable of salvation. We know that God's plan of salvation involves effort on our part, an effort described as a journey by the Apostle Paul - “let us run the race with patience”. By going up to Jerusalem people will learn the lesson that they themselves have to make the effort to travel to God in accordance with Matthew 7:7 “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”

Jerusalem, the commercial hub of the world

In the kingdom it will be the first time there has been a capital city of the world that people will visit from all over the globe – Isaiah 2:2 “And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it.” Since this will be the first time there has been a capital city of the world, this will be the first time there has been a single communication hub. This will be ideal for an international postal service along the lines of companies such as FedEx that operate using a system of transport hubs placed at strategic locations around the world.

For example, in this part of the world, FedEx used to have a hub at Subic Bay in the Philippines. A parcel shipped from Tokyo to Brisbane goes via Subic Bay. So, for example, a family might travel from Mexico to Jerusalem with a package for a family who live in Outer Mongolia. The family from Mexico deliver their package to the Jerusalem Post Office who pass it on to a group of families going back to Mongolia.

There are two very interesting questions in relation to travel to and from Jerusalem. The first is how will people travel, and the second is, will every man, woman and child on earth go up to Jerusalem once a year? We will consider each of these questions in turn.

How will people travel to and from Jerusalem?

At the beginning of the kingdom there will probably be fewer people on the Earth than at present, although as time goes by the population will probably increase. However, for the moment let us assume the population on earth at the beginning of the kingdom will be 6 billion people, about 1 billion less than at present, and ask the question if we had to get this number of required people to and from Jerusalem today how would we do it? Today there is no question that it would be done by air travel. We can do a few calculations to see what this would entail.

Today a lot of people travel internationally by air, although this is only a very small fraction of the total population of the world. Millions of people in third world countries have never flown and many people in the so-called developed world have never travelled by air out of choice. Therefore a huge increase in the capacity of the world’s airports would be required if everyone were to fly to and from Jerusalem annually. With such a high volume of air traffic converging on Jerusalem, the airport in Israel would have to be far larger than any airport in the world today.

Heathrow Airport is one of the busiest international airports in the world, and so we will use this airport as the basis for some calculations. In our imagination let us move Heathrow to Jerusalem. In 2006, the design capacity of Heathrow was 45 million passengers per year although in that year 67.5 million passed through the terminals and the number continues to grow. Both runways are at capacity and there is pressure to build a third.

In 2006, the 67.5 million passengers arrived and left on 469,560 flights – an average of one flight every 67 seconds! The reason that Heathrow is one of the busiest international airports is that it is a hub between America, Europe, Asia and Africa. Some people travel long distances

and some short. If Heathrow were in Israel we would expect a similar mix of long and short haul traffic. Assuming a world population of 6 billion and that everyone travels to Jerusalem once per year, 89 Heathrow's would be required in Israel. Israel would effectively become one huge airport. The noise, pollution, and air traffic control problems would be horrendous.

Another major problem in realising this vision, or perhaps nightmare, is that there simply isn't enough oil left in the world to fuel this level of air travel over the next millennia. And if there were, the extra amount of carbon dumped into the atmosphere would be a serious environmental problem. God could of course create the extra oil and remove the extra carbon, however, from our knowledge of the way God works this probably won't happen. Also, the airline manufacturing industry would have to continue into the kingdom, which is not in keeping with a world that has returned to a more agricultural existence.

Assuming that everyone in the world travels to and from Jerusalem once per year, the next problem to consider is how such a large number of people can enter and exit the temple throughout the year. If everyone in the world was to visit the temple each year that is about 16.4 million people per day or 680,000 per hour assuming the temple is open 24/7.

From Ezekiel we know that people will enter the temple through a southern gate and exit through a northern gate, or *vice versa*. We also know that people will not be able to walk straight through the centre of the temple but will have to travel around the inner court. Consider the problem of getting 680,000 people through the northern gates and a similar number through the southern gates every hour. If 680,000 people enter the temple each hour then a similar number must leave each hour.

Each side of the temple has 11 gates, therefore just under 62,000 people would have to pass through each gate per hour - about 1,000 per minute, or 17 per second! The width of each gate is 20 cubits or 40 feet, therefore each person has just over two feet of space. This rate of ingress and egress would be possible but people would have to keep in a straight line and people would probably have to queue for long periods of time.

However, people won't just walk through the temple and out the other side. People will stop to have a meal and do other things. No doubt there will be numerous families with young children with all the associated activities, feeding, going to the toilet, nappy changes etc. People will present sacrifices to the immortal priests who will then present the sacrifices to God on the altar. All of this will of course take time. If we suppose that every person receives at least one meal, 16.4 million meals will be required every day – a massive catering task.

If people are not going to travel to and from Jerusalem by plane how are they going to get there? We have two options – sea and overland travel or a combination of the two. We saw in the study on topographical changes in the kingdom that there could be an inland harbour in the north of Israel at the head of a waterway that extends eastwards and then southwards down to the Live Sea (formerly the Dead Sea).

Travel in the reign of Solomon

We saw earlier in the book that the kingdom of God actually existed on the Earth in the reign of Solomon (1 Chronicles 29:23), which is why just before his ascension, the disciples asked Jesus “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?” When Jesus returns he will restore this original kingdom. It therefore stands to reason that we can learn a lot about the kingdom by studying the reign of Solomon.

In particular Solomon was noted for trading with distant nations – more so than any other subsequent king of Israel or Judah. Solomon had a navy that worked closely with the navy of Hiram king of Tyre, or Phoenicia as Tyre is generally known historically. 1 Kings 10:11 “And the navy also of Hiram, that brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir great plenty of almug [sandalwood] trees, and precious stones”. 1 Kings 10:22 “For the king had at sea a navy of Tharshish with the navy of Hiram: once in three years came the navy of Tharshish, bringing gold, and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks.”

We know from 2 Chronicles 8:17-18 that Solomon had ships manned with Phoenecians as well as Jews who sailed from Ezion Gebar (modern day Eilat) to the port of Ophir on the west coast of India where Goa is today. The apes are probably the rhesus macaque monkey that lives on the Indian subcontinent. A strong clue that the ships went to India is the mention of sandalwood, which is only found in Asia. Ivory would have been obtained from elephant tusks of Indian elephants.

The fact that the ships took three years for a round trip gives us some indication of the extent of the journey. In the Nineveh gallery in the Assyrian section of the British Museum is a limestone wall carving showing Phoenecian merchants bringing long tailed rhesus macaque monkeys before an Assyrian king. This strongly suggests that the merchants had been to India to obtain monkeys and on their way back had navigated up the River Tigris to sell them in Nineveh. The ships would need to stop frequently for fresh food and water. It is possible that the ships were like travelling markets and would pick up goods in one location that they sold elsewhere along the route.

The ships may have also gone to Zanzibar on the east coast of Africa. It is also possible that the ships travelled westward to what is known historically as the western Tarshish as opposed to the eastern Tarshish which was the port of Ophir on the west coast of India. In the information on the wall panels of the Phoenician gallery of the BM the suggestion is made that the Phoenecian ships travelled to Britain to obtain tin from the Cornish mines.

Tin was extremely valuable as it was alloyed with copper to produce bronze. (N.B. the brass of the Bible would have been bronze, which is an alloy of copper and tin as opposed to brass which is an alloy of copper and zinc). Apparently the ships would race as fast as possible across the Mediterranean so that other ships would not be able to follow them and hence the source of tin would remain secret. The prophet Ezekiel talks about the trading acumen of Tyre – Ezekiel 27:12 “Tarshish was thy merchant by reason of the multitude of all kind of riches; with silver, iron, tin, and lead, they traded in thy fairs.”

Solomon also had merchants who traded with nations of the Arabian Peninsula which would have been accessed via overland routes. 1 Kings 10:15 “Beside that he had of the merchantmen, and of the traffic of the spice merchants, and of all the kings of Arabia, and of the governors of the country.”

The merchants also travelled to Egypt – 1 Kings 10:28 “And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt, and linen yarn: the king’s merchants received the yarn at a price. It is clear from the verses we have considered above that Israel was a hub for international trade in the reign of Solomon.

We also discover that many kings travelled from far and wide to converse with Solomon, the most notable being the Queen of Sheba. Once again this foreshadowed what will happen in the kingdom. Note the similarity between the following two verses – the first from the reign of Solomon and the second about the kingdom. 2 Chronicles 9:23 “And all the kings of the earth sought the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom, that God had put in his heart.” In Psalm 48:4 “For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.”

The lesson from the reign of Solomon is that Israel will be the centre of world trade. This of course makes absolute sense since Jerusalem is going to be the most connected city in the world. Thousands of ships and overland caravans are going to be arriving and leaving at any one moment.

Another piece of evidence suggesting that people will travel to and from Jerusalem by ship is Isaiah 33:20-21 “Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnities: thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quite habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords be broken. But there the glorious LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams; wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby.”

Verse 21 implies it will be possible for ships to get close to Jerusalem but they will not be allowed. It does not make sense to prohibit something that is not possible. This verse suggests there will be a waterway connecting the Live Sea to the Mediterranean Sea, as discussed in the chapter about topographical changes, making it possible for ships to sail down to Jerusalem. However the implication of Isaiah 33 is that there will be a line, which for the purposes of this book we will call the *Isaiah line* beyond which ships will not be allowed to pass.

If everyone travels to and from Jerusalem by ship, the Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea will be very crowded with ships, which might be a problem. A large ocean going liner can take several thousand people. However, we are still talking about 10,000 or so liners docking and undocking every day, which would be a serious problem. However, if people also travel to Jerusalem overland from Africa and Asia far fewer ships would be required.

Does everyone go to Jerusalem every year?

Before we go further we need to answer the second of our key questions. Does every man, woman and child go up to Jerusalem every year? If this is so people will spend a very large fraction of the year travelling. An enormous number of babies would be born away from home. Although it would be possible for everyone to travel to and from Jerusalem once a year it would be very inconvenient and people would become worn out.

We have an interesting precedent in Old Testament times of a Jewish family traveling to Jerusalem each year – Elkanah and Hannah – the parents of Samuel. After Samuel was born, Hannah did not go to Jerusalem to keep the feast until Samuel was weaned. We don't know how old Samuel would have been when Hannah went back to Jerusalem but he must have been a few years old – old enough to largely look after himself. The point of this discussion is that Hannah did not go to Jerusalem while Samuel was a young child which suggests this might also be the case in the kingdom.

We read in Zechariah 14:2 “For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem for battle...” and in Joel 3:2 God says that he will bring all nations into Israel for the battle of Armageddon. We understand these verses to mean that the entire world will be represented at the battle of Armageddon rather than every man women and child will be there. This suggests that in the kingdom *representatives* of each nation will go to Jerusalem each year.

Another informative passage is Psalm 48:12-13 “Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof. Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generations following.” If people talk about their experiences of visiting Jerusalem to subsequent generations it implies that not everyone visits each year. The above passage seems to indicate that going to Jerusalem will be relatively rare.

Another indication that not everyone will travel to Jerusalem each year is the following verses: Zechariah 8:20-23 “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities: And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also. Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.”

If everyone was traveling to Jerusalem each year there would be no need for one group of people to encourage another to go with them to Jerusalem. Maybe a particular city will take the lead in organising a trip to Jerusalem. No doubt quite a bit of planning will be required as life will go on in the cities remote from Jerusalem. If everyone travelled to Jerusalem each year, every town and city in the world would be completely empty for a period varying from a few weeks to several months each year, which is a scenario difficult to imagine. Although there would be no danger of theft from the vacant houses and buildings or wild animals moving in, the tasks of everyday life will need to continue.

Having ascertained that ships will play a very important role in transporting people to and from Jerusalem an interesting question is what type of ship will be involved? Will the cruise liners of

today be used? If this were the case more ships would probably have to be built and we have the problem of where is the oil going to come from as discussed in relation to air travel.

At the beginning of the kingdom we know that existing ships – called ships of Tarshish – i.e. those registered in London, will be used to bring the Jews back to their homeland and gold to kick start the economy of the kingdom. These will use existing oil supplies.

The so-called Age of Sail begun with Columbus' voyage across the oceans in 1492 and ended with the development of steam ships in the 19th century. Navigators became adept at navigating to just about all points on the globe.

In recent times experiments have been performed to combine diesel power with wind power by flying kites from ships. No doubt this option is becoming increasingly attractive with the escalating price of oil (before the crash in the oil price at the end of 2008). God doesn't send a bill for the use of wind! I personally find it exciting to see a sailing boat and to realise in principle it is possible to sail that boat anywhere in the world without fuel! There is no other form of transport enabling you to do this. Ultimately wind power is solar power as the energy comes from the sun coupled with the rotation of the earth.

There are famous groups of ships that plied the Seven Seas in olden times – e.g. the spice ships – as on the *Old Spice* aftershave bottles. There were also the tea ships that transported tea from Ceylon to England. These ships made use of the system of winds that circulate the planet – the so-called *trade winds* as they were used exactly for that purpose. The trade winds circulate the planet in a roughly easterly direction in the equatorial regions and west at the temperate latitudes.

At the moment there is an issue with the large number of shipping containers floating just below the surface of the water that are a major hazard to smaller ships. These containers have fallen off ships during storms etc. I once had a conversation with someone at work who was about to circumnavigate the globe on a sailing ship – containers were cited as a major problem.

Maybe searching and sinking containers is something else for the list of jobs that need to be done at the beginning of the kingdom. Maybe the existing network of spy satellites will be used to detect containers floating close to the surface – since they are metal there should be a reasonably strong radar reflection.

Since there will be many ships travelling to and from Israel at the beginning of the kingdom. The current GPS locations of all the discovered containers could be continuously transmitted to the world's ships – when a ship is close to a container an alarm would sound and a small boat sent from the ship to sink the container so it is no longer a danger. Presumably a container will just have to be holed to make it sink.

It maybe that nothing needs to be done since by the time sailing ships are in full use transporting people to and from Jerusalem the containers may have naturally sunk. Since there

probably won't be any more container ships plying the earth's oceans in the kingdom, the number of containers falling into the ocean will drop to zero.

If smaller sailing ships are used more frequent stops will be required to obtain food and water. There are a lot of small islands dotted over the oceans so there will be no need to travel for thousands of km without calling into a port. The cargo ships of today travel over large distances without stopping to make as much money as possible.

Although we may quibble about the use of old sailing ship technology we need to bear in mind that sailing ships were very effect in the past once the problems associated with scurvy and finding longitude were solved. The problem of scurvy was solved by the discovery that the disease was caused by a lack of vitamin C due to the absence of fresh fruit and vegetables in the sailors' diet.

In the absence of GPS, ships navigators will go back to using the stars. Modern day maritime navigators are still trained to navigate using the sun and stars. Latitude and longitude can be obtained by noting the position of a celestial object at a known time – Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) now known as Universal Time (UT).

Personally I imagine that travel by ship in the kingdom will be similar in some ways to travel on a modern day cruise liner in that ships will travel relatively short distances to give people a chance to visit many different countries and islands and to obtain fresh supplies of food and drink.

Sometimes it will be necessary to wait until a storm has cleared – maybe similar to what should have happened when the Apostle Paul warned the crew on a ship sailing to Rome (Acts 27). Paul advised the soldier in charge of the expedition to spend the winter in port but because the weather seemed clement decided to press on. It is clear from the record that without divine intervention all on board would have been lost.

In the kingdom there will be infallible weather forecasting – i.e. the saints will be able to advise the captains of the ships travelling to and from Jerusalem about the weather they will encounter along the way. Also since the saints will be able to communicate with each other at any distance they will be able to send weather reports to each other.

A remarkable section in the Psalms describes travel by ship in the kingdom. Psalm 107:23-31 "They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the LORD and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wit's end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then they are glad because they are quite; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his wonderful works to the children of men."

There will still be storms in the kingdom as that is part of the normal operation of the geophysical system of the earth. No doubt people will get caught in rough seas and will pray to God in their distress. God will answer their prayer and calm the sea as Jesus did when on a boat on the Sea of Galilee with his disciples. This will be a test of faith for those travelling by ship in the kingdom. God controlled the weather when Jonah was trying to escape to the Western Tarshish (probably the UK as discussed previously). God caused the storm and created the ensuing calm.

Another question is how people will travel from either Ezion Geber or Zebulun Haven to Jerusalem? If we were designing a transport system for today we might choose to use a high speed train system like those often used to connect airports to city centres. Personally, I don't think that this will be the case as it is not in keeping with a low-tech world. Some people will walk to Jerusalem and some will travel by a horse drawn carriage.

Will there be cars in the kingdom?

A question that is often asked is will there be cars in the kingdom? Personally I think the answer is no, for similar reasons that there will not be aircraft. In Zechariah 8:5 we read that children will play in the streets of Jerusalem. This suggests that the streets will not be full of cars, buses and taxis. As we all know cars and children playing in streets tend to be incompatible.

At the rate of consumption in 2015, it is estimated that oil will last another 40 years. Even with new discoveries of reserves and new extraction techniques oil reserves will most likely be depleted at some time in the latter half of the 21 century. Of course, oil will become scarce a long time before the final drop is extracted. The indications are that the return of Jesus will occur several decades before the end of oil.

As a result of the looming end of oil and the necessity to cut carbon emissions to prevent the average temperature of the Earth's surface increasing by more than 2 °C, much work is being done on developing electric cars – the Tesla for example. Whatever happens, at the beginning of the kingdom a lot of unused cars will need to be removed. Very few things are as effective as a rusting car to lower the tone of an area.

In Isaiah 32:18 we read “And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.” This doesn't sound like a modern city. A large fraction of cities are taken up by road, for example 25% of London is road. And of course there is the associated pollution and the frustration of slow travel. Apparently, at some times during the day, the average speed of travel in London is slower than it was in the era of the horse drawn carriage! A few years ago (1997) an article appeared predicting all day traffic jams in the UK.

When Jesus was 12 years old he walked with his family from Nazareth to Jerusalem and back again. The distance between Nazareth and Jerusalem is about 100 km. Note that his family walked for a whole day from Jerusalem before Joseph and Mary realised that Jesus was

missing. They assumed that he was walking with others in the group. This incident gives us an insight into the way people will travel to Israel in the kingdom. They will walk in family and town groups (Zechariah 8:20 "...and the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD...").

From today's perspective, travelling in this way is unthinkable. We live in a world where children have to watch an iPad while traveling long distance in a car (at least my children do here in Australia). However, the mind-set of the kingdom will be entirely different from today. Personally I think that people will look back at our time and be incredulous that people would sit in a small metal chariot with rubber wheels creeping along for several hours at a time.

We also need to bear in mind that since people will live much longer in the kingdom – it won't be too long into the kingdom when the life expectancy will be longer than the time remaining to the end of the thousand years. Assuming an arbitrary average life expectancy of 700 years for the kingdom compared to 70 years for today, living for 70 years in the kingdom will be equivalent to reaching 7 today! Relative to today people will have 10 times as much time to travel than today. With more time people will not be in such a rush.

There will be enormous benefits to travelling this way in the kingdom. Imagine the wealth of educational opportunities travelling to and from Jerusalem – all the different cultures experienced – the huge variety of food, clothing, art, music, buildings etc. There will be more time to learn about the huge variety of plants, birds and animals of the world. People will also learn a lot from each other. Imagine people sitting around the squares of Jerusalem at night talking and the children of complete strangers playing with each other in complete safety.

In the kingdom travel will be a combination of land and sea routes, as was the case in the past. For example, the Silk Road was an overland route that connected central China with Europe. However, the Silk Road also included sea routes.

An ancient spice-trading network was discovered in Arabia in 1992 using remote sensing. An image, taken by the space shuttle in 1994, shows a network of routes converging on Ubar in Oman, which was a centre for trade in spices such as frankincense and myrrh. It is possible that this is where the wise men obtained the frankincense and myrrh that they gave to Jesus.

We know that Egypt, Israel and Assyria are going to be connected by a highway – Isaiah 19:23-25 "In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel my inheritance." At the southern end this highway will connect to the overland route into Africa, possibly the same route taken by the Eunuch returning to Ethiopia in the first century AD. At the northern end it will connect with routes to central Asia.

There are still places in the world where there are long walking trails still in use – for example the 3,500 km long Appalachian Trail running from Georgia to Maine in the US, and the 431 km long Pennine Way in the UK that runs from Derbyshire to just inside the Scottish border. There are many trails in Asia, for example in the Himalayan foothills in Nepal where teahouses are spaced about a day's walk apart. Maybe in the kingdom there will be towns that are spaced a day's journey apart enabling people to travel for most of the day and then stop for the night. Each town will contain numerous hotels – maybe they should be called *trotels* – short for trekking hotels as opposed to motor hotels or motels. Maybe each town will be at the centre of a large number of villages, the centre of farming communities that will supply food and drink to travellers.

In many cases people may travel to and from Jerusalem by a mixture of land and sea. Even those who live in a seaport will at least travel overland from either Zebulon Haven or Ezion Geber to Jerusalem and Yahweh Shamar. Some people may travel overland to a river port to board a ship. For example, for someone living in central Europe an efficient way to get to Jerusalem might be to travel down the Danube to the Black Sea and then by ship to Zebulon Harbour.

International romance in the kingdom?

With such a large number of people going up to Jerusalem from year to year, there is obviously a lot of scope for young people to meet and romance to blossom. In fact it is inconceivable that this won't happen. This will lead to many more cross-cultural marriages than today. Today, this can lead to problems, especially when there are religious differences. In the kingdom there will be no religious differences and therefore marriages will be on a more solid foundation. With many more international marriages no doubt there will be a lot of extra travel as family members travel across the world to see each other.

A very interesting documentary is Michael Palins's *Around the World in 80 days* in which Michael Palin attempts to circumnavigate the globe following in the footsteps of Jules Verne's fictional character Finius Fog. As in story, there was no plane travel. Palin, and the film crew travelled from Athens (Greece) to Alexandria (Egypt) by ship. Palin interviews the captain of the vessel asking him what he thinks about modern air travel making the world a smaller place. The captain replies that air travel is making people smaller. The captain describes the advantages of sea travel – he explains that every day is different – different sea, different sky, different weather, and in each port you meet different people.

Later in the documentary the team travel from Dubai in the Middle East to Bombay in a dhow. We are shown scenes of a boat yard where dhows are made using traditional techniques – e.g. a drill powered by hand using a kind of bow. On the ship the navigator uses a sextant. A sextant is used to measure the angular height of the Sun and stars above the horizon and by knowing the GMT time it is possible to calculate your position on the Earth.

An interesting question is how are people going to be entertained on a long sea voyage without the electronic gadgets of today? People will talk to each other, read books, write, be involved in

Bible study sessions. Admittedly, Bible study on a ship may seem like a totally alien concept today but we need to bear in mind that in the kingdom people will actually be interested in learning about God (Isaiah 2:3). In ‘old days’ it was normal to have a 2-hour lecture whereas today the attention span has shrunk to the interval between TV adverts. We can look forward to an increase in peoples’ attention span in the kingdom.

How will the saints travel?

When we consider the kingdom we always have to realise that life for saints will be quite different from the mortal population. So how will we travel around? The answer is found in Isaiah 40:31 “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” Similarly, in Psalm 103:5 we read “Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” If we can fly then of course we will be able to do so without wings.

Isaiah 31:5 “As birds flying, so will the LORD of hosts defend Jerusalem; defending also he will deliver it; and passing over he will preserve it.” What is the connection between God’s defence of Jerusalem and flying birds? It must be that the protective agency is airborne. No doubt this refers to God’s defence of Jerusalem in the past (for example when 185,000 of the Assyrian army was destroyed in the time of Hezekiah).

Maybe this verse also has an application to the defence of Jerusalem during Armageddon, as described in Zechariah 14. Jesus is clearly going to descend onto the Mount of Olives from the air. Since the saints will arrive with Jesus it is logical that they too will arrive from the air.

Angels can obviously fly. Here are two examples, the first in Daniel 9:21 “Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation.” Jesus himself ascended up into the sky until he disappeared out of sight in a cloud. And the second in Judges 13:20 “For it came to pass, when the flame went up toward heaven from off the altar, that the angle of the LORD ascended in the flame of the altar. And Manoah and his wife looked on it, and fell on their faces to the ground.”

9. Trade in the kingdom

Today trade is an integral part of life. We earn money and spend it on essentials like food, clothing and a home and many other things as well. People will need to earn and spend money in the kingdom which means an economy will exist.

Economic collapse

In an earlier section of the study we briefly discussed the fact that the world economy will collapse at the return of Jesus. The description of the time of the end given in Daniel 12:4 “a time of trouble such as never was” suggests this will occur. However, an interesting question is whether this will happen before or after the saints are taken away. In the modern era with respect to the time period over which this book was written, the world appears to have been teetering on the brink of economic collapse – ever since the so-called Global Financial Crisis (GFC) that started in 2008.

Jesus talks about the condition of the world just prior to his return in Luke 17:28 “Likewise as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded.” Jesus suggests a time of prosperity when the saints are taken away. This is commensurate with Isaiah 26:19-21 “Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.”

Putting all this together seems to indicate that the world economy will not have totally collapsed when the saints are taken away, but will do so after.

We have parabolic language in the verses above. The saints are described as dwelling in the dust and emerging to become dew drops that sparkle in the morning Sun. In Parable World, the transition from dust to dew is the resurrection and return of Jesus to the Earth is sunrise. Dew drops can also look like stars in the morning Sun which connects with Daniel 12:3. The saints go into a place of refuge while God’s judgements are on the Earth.

In Daniel 2, the stone cut out without hands causes the collapse of the image - the image does not collapse before the arrival of the stone. From Isaiah 2 it is also clear that the collapse of the world economy is caused by God. Isaiah 2:10-22 describes the collapsed condition of the world economy after the return of Jesus. The first verse of this section sets the scene, Isaiah 2:10 “Enter into the rock, and hide thee in the dust, for fear of the LORD, and for the glory of his majesty.” Clearly Jesus has returned at this point and the ensuing verses describe the condition of the world subsequent to the return.

It is quite possible that many people without a knowledge of Bible prophecy will think that a malevolent alien invasion is in progress, and in fact from their point of view that is not actually far off the mark. Maybe this perception is understandable from those who know nothing about the character of God. At the beginning of the kingdom, people will have to be taught that God is not out to indiscriminately destroy people. People will learn that God will destroy those who are persistently disobedient, but will look after those who obey him.

The collapse of the world economy is summarised succinctly in Isaiah 2:20 “In that day shall a man cast his idols of silver, and his idols of gold, which they made each one for himself to worship, to the moles and to the bats.” What are these idols of silver and gold? There may be a few places in the world where people do actually have idols made from solid silver and gold, although in general this is not the case. However, Isaiah 2:20 appears to be global in nature, and therefore the idols must be metaphorical.

In the past silver and gold were used as money. For example the Apostle Peter says to the lame man in Acts 3:6 “...Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk.” Therefore the silver and gold in Isaiah 2:20 can be considered analogous to money. The picture is completed when we read in Colossians 3:5 “covetousness, which is idolatry”. The silver and gold idols are therefore agencies for obtaining material wealth, which is broader than just money, and includes stocks and shares, bonds and other financial instruments. When I read Isaiah 2 I always have a picture of bats making nests out of discarded bank notes and share certificates.

Isaiah 2 says that a time is coming when the money of today will be valueless. This has occurred in the past, for example the Weimar Republic (1921-24) was struck by hyperinflation – in other words out of control inflation. On 23 November, the exchange rate between the German Mark and US dollar was over 4.2 *trillion* Marks to the US dollar! Money was abandoned in the streets and was even burnt as fuel as this was more cost effective than using the money to buy wood. The words of Isaiah suggest that something is going to cause money to be abandoned – maybe not hyperinflation – but something with the same effect.

In the past, the amount of money a country had in circulation and held in bank vaults was backed up by an equivalent amount of gold. This system was known as the *gold standard*. A major factor in the demise of the gold standard was a series of economic reforms implemented by President Nixon in 1971 known collectively as the *Nixon Shock*. One of these edicts uncoupled the value of the US dollar from gold. I don't know much about money and economics but from what I have read, and from documentaries, and discussions with people who know far more than me, the removal of the gold standard has had a part to play in the financial problems the world has faced since the uncoupling of the dollar from gold.

Today the vast majority of money is electronic in form. In any modern city it is possible to live without actually using physical money – just about anything can be bought with a bankcard of some description. Then there is the rise of Bitcoin. I don't really understand what this is,

although it seems to be a system for exacting financial transactions that bypasses the banking system.

In an earlier section of the study we discussed the collapse of the electronic global communication system, i.e. phone lines, internet etc. If there's no power computers will not work. The only money left will be the notes and coins that people have in their possession and silver and gold in various repositories, e.g. Fort Knox in the USA.

Will money exist in the kingdom?

We sometimes have an idealistic view of the kingdom and imagine that people will not have to use money. However, it is certain that money will be used in the kingdom since we read in Ezekiel 45:12 "And the shekel shall be twenty gerahs: twenty shekels, five and twenty shekels, shall be your maneh."

We might argue that this verse only applies to the temple and not the rest of the world. However, I would suggest that this cannot be the case for the following reasons. The temple is the house of prayer for all people and therefore people will have to buy items in Israel, e.g. food – assuming it's not free. The mention of money presumes it will be used. In a sense money is a language. Different currencies are different languages. Exchange rates are the means of translating between currencies. If people have their own currencies we can see that the situation in Israel could become very complicated with numerous currencies being exchanged for shekels.

There is absolutely no need why the world cannot have the same currency. This is partially true today. In many parts of the world the US dollar is a *de facto* universal currency. (On a trip to Israel a number of years ago I used US dollars and don't recall ever using shekels). In Europe there is the *Euro*, which in a sense is an artificial universal currency. However, the US dollar and Euro are not true universal currencies in that there are many places where they cannot be used.

A related topic to money in the kingdom is language. Today, English is the *de facto* universal language of the world and French is the *de facto* universal diplomatic language. Zephaniah 3:9 suggests that there will be a universal language in the kingdom – "For then will I turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the LORD, to serve him with one consent."

It has been suggested that this language will be Hebrew since the preceding verse contains all the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. If there will be a universal language in the kingdom why not a universal currency? We know that Jerusalem will be the capital of the world in the kingdom, and we know that shekels will be used in Jerusalem, and therefore it makes sense that the shekel should become a worldwide currency.

In ancient times silver and gold were used as money. We read of an example of this is Genesis 23:16 "And Abraham hearkened unto Ephron; and Abraham weighed to Ephron the silver,

which he had named in the audience of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant.” Today we used bank notes made from material has very little value in itself. For example in Australia bank notes are made from some kind of paper-like plastic. The cost of printing a \$50 is the same as printing a \$5 note.

In later times, silver and gold were formed into coins. Gold was the preferred metal to use for striking coins as gold is malleable, and therefore easy to press into a coin, and gold coins last longer than silver coins. Over a period of time gold coins change their shape but tend to stay in one piece whereas coins made from harder metals tend to have pieces break off and decrease in mass.

Although there is no universal currency as previously discussed, gold is used as a *de facto* universal currency. Gold is universally accepted as a valuable metal and can be converted into any currency. In uncertain times gold is bought as an investment. The price of gold does fluctuate but it will never become valueless as can happen with paper currency and share certificates – hence the phrase that something “is not worth the paper it’s written on”. This will be true after the collapse of the global system after the return of Jesus.

The kingdom of God on Earth will be a restored version of the kingdom of Israel in Solomon’s time. Silver and gold were used as money then, which implies it will be in the future. If this is the case, the next question is where is the silver and gold going to come from for the money described in Ezekiel 45:12? The answer is found in Isaiah 60:9 “Surely the isles shall wait for me, and the ships of Tarshish first, to bring thy sons from far, their silver and their gold with them, unto the name of the LORD thy God, and to the Holy one of Israel, because he hath glorified thee.”

Kick starting the economy of the kingdom

The new shekels and talents will be needed to kick start the economy of the kingdom. The global financial system will have completely gone and so there will be no connection between money in the kingdom and the currencies of today. Any of the hard currencies that exist at the beginning of the kingdom will be similar to monopoly money today. The silver and gold that comes to Israel from around the world will be a free gift to re-start the world economy. There will be a method of redistributing this money back to the gentile nations. At the beginning of the kingdom there are a number of urgent jobs required.

As briefly mentioned in the chapter on the establishment of the kingdom, the first employees of the kingdom will be the bone buriers. We are told explicitly that people will be employed to bury bones in Ezekiel 39:14 “And they shall sever out men of continual employment, passing through the land to bury with the passengers those that remain on the earth, to cleanse it: after the end of seven months shall they search. And the passengers that pass through the land, when any seeth a man’s bone, then shall they set up a sign by it, till the buriers have buried it in the valley of Hamongog”. From the previous verses we see that the general population in Israel will bury the dead from the battle of Armageddon over a period of seven months. The bone

buriers are the mopping up operation which will involve searching for 'bone flags' and transporting to a place called Hamongog where a mass burial operation will be in progress.

We might expect that there will be a transition period to the new currency. The bone buriers will be paid in the new currency. Since we are told that the bone buriers will be official employees of the newly established kingdom of God on Earth it stands to reason that there should be a new currency. The bone buriers will use their money to buy, food, clothing and shelter etc, and in turn the money the shop owners spend the new currency on things that they need.

A lot of new cities will also need to be built in Israel to accommodate those who are left after Armageddon (one third of the pre-Armageddon population) and for those who are returning as part of the Elijah mission. The temple in Jerusalem will be built, the government buildings, the dormitory city Yahweh Shamar etc. In today's money this will cost billions of dollars. Maybe in some ways this will be similar to the New Deal that got the US out of economic depression in the 1930's.

The weapons in Israel will need to be collected into piles and burned Ezekiel 39:9 "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and they shall burn them with fire seven years". Unexploded mines around the world will need to be discovered and deactivated in some way. A major difference between the economy of the kingdom and of the world today is that spending on weapons will plummet to zero. Instead the equivalent resources will be put into agriculture, a subject we will explore in more details in a subsequent chapter.

The barter system

In ancient times the barter system was used extensively, i.e. swapping goods for goods without the medium of money. A prime example of this is in the reign of Solomon – the prototypical kingdom of God on Earth. When the Queen of Sheba visited Solomon she arrived loaded with goods; 1 Kings 10:2 "And she [Sheba] came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones..." We also have the additional detail that camels were used to carry these goods from southern Arabia, possibly the same area the wise men came from who brought gifts to Jesus. No doubt camels will be used extensively in the kingdom with people travelling to and from Jerusalem from Sheba using exactly the same route as the Queen of Sheba over 3,000 years before.

The goods that transported from the south of the Arabian Peninsula were given to Solomon: 1 Kings 10:10 "And she [Sheba] gave the king an hundred and twenty talents of gold, and of spices of very great store, and precious stones: there came no more such abundance of spices as these which the Queen of Sheba gave to king Solomon."

At first sight we might think that this was just a thank you present for accommodation in Jerusalem – say to compensate for the large quantity of food and drink that will be consumed

by the Queen of Sheba's entourage. That may be true to a certain extent, however when we read on we discover that Solomon also gave the Queen of Sheba a large amount of goods: 1 Kings 10:13 "And king Solomon gave unto the Queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants." This must have been what today is called *counter-trade*.

Solomon also processed the sandalwood (almug) obtained from Asia, a process called *value adding* today. 1 kings 10:12 "And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the house of the LORD, and for the king's house, harps also and psalteries for singers: there came no such almug trees, nor were seen unto this day.

We are not so familiar with the bartering system in everyday life in the Developed World. For example if you were to walk into your local supermarket with a bag of carrots that you had just dug out of the ground and washed and asked to swap them with an equal weight of carrots they would say no. However, bartering still occurs on an international scale, although governments are not so enthusiastic since companies avoid paying sales tax.

For example a number of years ago Saudi Arabia swapped a quantity of oil for some jumbo jets manufactured by Boeing. No money changed hands in the process (although no doubt there would have been a huge pile of legal documents). The oil was not actually delivered to the 747 plant at Everett in Washington State, but was in tanks in Rotterdam. Boeing was given oil, which was worth 5% more on the spot markets than the price of the jumbo jets. This is what we might call a win-win situation. In similar fashion the Russians swapped a batch of old submarines for a consignment of Pepsi. Pepsi turned the submarines into restaurants.

On the basis that Solomon's reign was a prototype of the kingdom it seems that bartering will take place in the kingdom, no doubt at a local level as well as international. Maybe I'm being too idealistic but I imagine that a barter system will gradually evolve with a kind of *vegetable exchange rate* i.e. that 1 kg of carrots are worth 1 kg of turnips. An advantage of a barter system is that no one feels ripped off – assuming of course that the quality of the good being exchanged is comparable.

A big issue in the world today is inflation and it seems that the world needs inflation to exist, for example to diminish debt. Is a world without inflation possible? I think it would be really great if the price of bread was constant throughout the kingdom. Although I don't know much about economics, it seems to me that the barter system is relatively immune to inflation. Using the example above, if 1 kg of carrots is equal to 1 kg of turnip at the beginning of the kingdom there is absolutely no need why that should be true at the end of the kingdom.

We might argue that this could happen if there were a turnip famine! But we know for sure that there will be no turnip famine in the kingdom, or any other famine. If anything, too much agricultural production will be a problem in the kingdom, as exemplified by Amos 9:13 "Behold, the days come saith the LORD, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the

treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.” (We will revisit this verse in the chapter on agriculture).

I think that a scriptural case can be made for there being no interest in the kingdom. In OT times the Israelites were told not to exact usury, or interest, of each other. Deuteronomy 23:19-29 Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of victuals, usury of anything that is lent upon usury: Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to do in the land whither thou goest to possess it.”

God intended Israel to be an example nation to the rest of the world – Deuteronomy 4:5-6 “Behold, I have taught you judgements and statutes and judgements, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.”

As we saw earlier the kingdom will be a restored and expanded version of the kingdom of God on Earth during Solomon’s reign. This implies that there will be no usury or interest in the kingdom. Interest is how banks mostly ‘make’ money today. If there is no interest in the kingdom how is extra money going to be generated as the economy of the kingdom increases? Extra money could be generated by the ‘Central Bank in Jerusalem’ buying goods and services with money. We saw earlier that this will happen at the beginning of the kingdom when the first ‘employees’ of the new government of the kingdom, the bone buriers, are paid in the new currency.

A different attitude to wealth in the kingdom

There will be a different attitude to money in the kingdom – more along the lines of 1 Timothy 6:6 “But godliness with contentment is great gain” Can we imagine this verse fixed to the wall behind the desk of an investment banker?

In recent times we have seen 1 Timothy 6:9,10 in action: “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” Most of us have probably seen photographs of share traders with their heads in their hands despairing of what is happening.

According to the many articles I have read about the 2008 crisis arose because of dodgy and unsustainable economic practices. In particular, something known as Long Term Credit Management (LTCM) has been criticised, which depended on loans being repaid. A large number of bad loans in the system, so-called *toxic debt*, brought the system down. A good documentary about the GFC is Inside Job, although I had to watch a second time to try and get my head around what went on, and I still don’t fully understand it.

It would seem that there is a natural law in operation that money cannot be generated out of nothing – a kind of financial equivalent to the first law of thermodynamics which states that energy cannot be generated out of nothing (sometimes phrased that there is no such thing as a ‘free lunch’).

Maybe this financial law is enshrined in the words of Jesus in Luke 10:7 “...the labourer is worthy of his hire”. If money is received for goods and services the economy works fine – when the generation of money involves some scheme that does not involve money being paid for goods and services, e.g. derivatives, short selling, betting on loan defaults, problems arise.

In scripture, we have no record of Jesus actually using money in his ministry, although of course he would have handled money when he was running his carpentry business in Nazareth. In spite of this inauspicious background in financial management Jesus will be running the economy of the entire world in the kingdom! In today’s world there is no way that the owner of a one-man carpentry business would be appointed to the chairmanship of the International Monetary Fund, World Bank or any of the treasury departments of the world.

Prior to their appointment, all these people would have been in charge of very large financial organisation or been a professor at a prestigious university (e.g. Harvard, Yale, Princeton). Although Jesus has no experience of managing a large financial organisation, God considers him to be the best person to rule the world. However, in the kingdom, it is probable that saints with financial experience will assist Jesus.

In the kingdom people will be ‘poorer’ in the sense that they will not own all the “stuff” that we own today. However, people will be richer in the sense that they will live in better houses with a lot more space inside and outside the house. However, people will have houses appropriate to their needs.

In the previous section of our study we discussed transport in the kingdom and put forward the view that cars and planes will not be used. Today, oil and cars are the largest sectors of the economy. If there are cars and planes in the kingdom then automotive and aerospace industries will be required.

Maybe we have trouble contemplating a world without cars. However, the world has survived without cars for most of its history. Although the motor car has many positive features it has been responsible for millions of deaths. (NB During the height of the terrorist violence in Northern Ireland, car fatalities outnumbered terrorist fatalities by two to one). The purpose of the kingdom is to fill this Earth with men and women with the glory of God?

We are told very clearly in Ezekiel 45:10 “Ye shall have just balances, and a just ephah, and a just bath” that there won’t be any dodgy dealing due to under-weight weighing weights and under-volume volumes. The world of the kingdom will be much closer to God’s ideal that it is

today. Proverbs 11:1 “A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight.” In the kingdom shoppers will not get ripped off.

Rich and poor

In the kingdom there will be poor people and by implication rich people as well. For example we read in Psalm 72:4 “He shall judge the poor of the people”. However, it is likely that references to poor people in Psalm 72 refers to the situation at the beginning of the kingdom when we will be involved in a huge humanitarian effort to give people food, clothing and shelter.

In subsequent chapters we will look at agriculture and buildings in the kingdom and see that for the first time ever everyone will have enough food and own their own house. Nevertheless in any economy there are those that manage to make more money than others and there is no reason to suspect that this will be different in the kingdom. As we saw in a previous chapter, we have indications in scripture that at the beginning of the kingdom the population of the world will be much less than today – possibly under half.

With the average life span of people in the kingdom being 10 times greater than today, very few people will die of old age in the kingdom. As we will see in the chapter on health in the kingdom, very few people will die of disease; therefore most of the deaths will be due to accidents. Therefore the population of the world in the kingdom will not be static but will increase.

Zechariah draws our attention to the number of children playing in the streets of Jerusalem. Zechariah 8:5 “And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.” If the population were stable in the kingdom the birth rate would have to be extremely small and seeing a child would be rare. We get the impression from Zephaniah that there are so many children they spill over into the streets as they play.

Ship building

A major sector of the economy of the kingdom will be shipbuilding. As the population of the kingdom expands, an increasing number of ships will be required to transport people to and from Jerusalem. Also the capacity of some of the overland routes, especially those close to Israel, may need expanding from time to time. There will also have to be a network of ports throughout the world as ships will need to stop off on the way to Jerusalem for food and water etc.

What level of technology will exist in the kingdom?

This is probably the most frequently discussed point about the kingdom. At the moment technology is developing at an increasingly rapid pace. New computers, mobile phones, cameras, iPods etc. are being developed all the time. In the case of computers it is necessary to keep on updating the software at regular intervals. It's not that the original software can no longer be used is no longer useful – you need the new software so you can communicate with the rest of the world.

At work I show my students two mobile phone adverts from 1988 - before many of my students were born! The phones are so large that today they would not be recognised as mobile phones – but assumed to be some other kind of device, e.g. a mobile computer. Films tend to show the latest technology, including mobile phones, available at the time. In the same way the age of a tree can be determined from tree rings it is possible to date a film from the on-screen technology.

We sometimes speak of a world gone mad. Recently I was walking home from work down Adelaide street (which is in Brisbane) and saw a woman in a business style dress speaking loudly into the air. I assumed she had a hands free phone. When she passed I could see no phone and I could tell from the look in her eyes and the content of the bag that she was carrying that she was genuinely mad rather than ‘techno mad’ and was talking to herself!

Today, technology has to keep moving. In order to survive in the long term companies need to keep on developing new products to provide an income stream. Consumers often throw away a perfectly good electronic product because it has been replaced by a newer model. We probably all know of people who have to acquire the latest product. Apparently it is possible to retrieve electronic products from rubbish tips in Japan not yet on sale in the rest of the world!

Environmentalists express great concern about the pace of development since a lot of natural resources are being depleted, although recycling is addressing some of these concerns and a few companies are now building environmentally friendly products, e.g. Apple computer. An interesting question is whether the consumer economy will continue into the kingdom.

A test of whether a particular industry will exist in the kingdom is whether it can be done at a local level, i.e. as a *cottage industry*. Electronic products, e.g. computers, mobile phones, iPods, plasma screens, and cars etc. cannot be manufactured in a back yard shed. In the case of computers, powerful computers are required to design computer chips. Car manufacturers sit on top of a vast subcontracting pyramid, e.g. the companies that produce the electronic subsystems, tyre manufacturers etc.

What sorts of industries will exist in the kingdom? Here is a list of kingdom careers: potter, stone mason, carpenter, glass blower, blacksmith, tailor, cobbler, builder, baker, farmer, shipwright, chandler (candle maker), brick maker, shop owner, restaurateur. All of these cottage industries can be performed by a single person if necessary, or small groups of people. Several years ago I visited a pottery, called Pillage Pottery, about 33 km north of the town of Coonabarabran, NSW. This pottery, one of the largest in Australia, is a family business although they employ others who they consider to be part of their ‘pottery family’. The pottery also has a café and holiday cabins for tourists and school groups. The pottery is eco-friendly and uses solar power. They also grow some of their own food.

The Pillage Pottery is a very good model for the type of business operations that exist in the kingdom. Businesses like this may well exist along the overland routes where they will provide

accommodation for people travelling to and from Jerusalem and also make pottery or other items for the rest of the world. All of these businesses along the route would be part of a global economy since it will be possible to send pottery to anywhere in the world via Jerusalem. For example, if a pottery exists in Xian in China, they could send a consignment of cups to Buenos Aires in Argentina via the Silk Road to Israel and then from Israel to South America on a ship.

One feature I noticed in particular when visiting Pillaga Pottery was the highly ornate and unusual chimney. I was fascinated by this creative chimney as it illustrated another aspect of the kingdom that will be different from today – far less mass production and therefore greater product diversity. However, at the time of writing (2015) the world is moving towards customisation through technology – for example create your own hamburger in McDonalds.

Will mining exist in the kingdom?

Some natural resources will be required for the kingdom industries listed above. However, I personally don't think that there's any need for mining on the scale that we see today as there will be a massive amount of material that can be recycled, e.g. steel from high rise buildings and cars, aluminium from planes and window frames etc. glass, bricks, copper from electrical wiring, titanium from aircraft. In the kingdom there may be a huge recycling industry making use of materials left over from the world of today.

Here in Australia I am amused and fascinated by the innovative uses of the steel 44-gallon drum –for example half a drum being used as the base of a campfire, a windmill, water tank and even a lectern for a lecture! I imagine a huge increase in the amount of local innovation in the kingdom.

Energy in the kingdom

A subject tightly coupled with trade is energy. What energy sources will be used in the kingdom? Will the power stations of today fuelled by coal, gas, oil and nuclear power continue into the kingdom? As discussed in previous studies the Great Earthquake triggered by the splitting of the Mount of Olives will severely damage infrastructure including overhead and underground power lines, power stations, gas pipe lines, oil refineries etc.

My personal view is that in the kingdom people will use mostly pre-electric forms of lighting, e.g. olive oil lamps and candles. Wood fires will be used for cooking. We might consider going back to pre-electric lighting and cooking a retrogressive step. Is it such a step back? Let's compare a wood-fired oven with an electric oven. With a wood-fired oven you get the fuel locally, put the wood into an oven and use nearly all the energy 'stored' in the wood for cooking. The source of fuel, wood, is a renewable energy source and is carbon neutral – i.e. no net amount of carbon is released into the atmosphere since the carbon in the wood came from the atmosphere in the form of carbon dioxide ingested by the tree. Therefore the burning of wood does not contribute to global warming.

In the case of an electric oven the situation is a lot more complicated. In the vast majority of cases, the energy is generated at a power station remote from the oven. The power station will usually be fuelled by so-called fossil fuels, i.e. coal, oil or gas.

These fuels are called fossil fuels as they were formed from plant material at some point in the past. The burning of fossil fuels *does* increase the net amount of carbon in the atmosphere since the carbon released did not recently come from the atmosphere. Although the issue of what is causing global warming is controversial there is strong evidence that the average temperature of the world is due to the increase in greenhouse gas emissions (mostly carbon dioxide) human activity since the beginning of the industrial revolution in the 1800's.

The fossil fuel burnt in a power station heats water and turns it into steam. The steam drives a turbine that drives a dynamo (wire coils which rotate in a magnetic field). The electricity is then transformed into a high potential for transmission over several hundred km to minimise power loss due to ohmic heating. When it reaches a population centre, the electricity is transformed again to provide either 240 or 110 Volts to domestic homes where the electricity finally reaches the oven! The efficiency of a coal-fired power station is about 27%, which means that nearly three quarters of the original energy is lost on the way to the oven. Burning wood for cooking is about four times more efficient than a power station. Another major advantage of using wood as a cooking fuel in the kingdom is the absence of unsightly power lines – I'm really looking forward to that!

A similar argument can be used for olive oil lamps. Olive oil is also a carbon neutral fuel and an olive oil lamp doesn't need wires. In the kingdom people may also make use of wind power. I imagine people using windmills to fill raised tanks with water to provide a pressurised domestic water supply, pump water around a solar heating unit and maybe run a fountain or waterfall in the garden. It is possible that some enterprising might build electric generators powered by wind or water. It is possible that someone may devise a way of manufacturing cheap electric solar panels that can be manufactured at a local level. Solar heated hot water systems may be common in the kingdom. If electricity is used in the kingdom I personally think it will only be generated and used locally.

Today we always think of a city as high-tech and the country as low-tech. Over the last few years I've changed my perspective. For example, a forest is full of living plants that are far more complex than a concrete building stuffed with networked computers. A concrete pavement is a very simple entity compared to a blade of grass. So, we can consider a city in the middle of a forest to be a low-tech hole.

To illustrate this point, consider the following. For the moment suppose that you could go into a hardware/gardening store and buy a solar-powered jellybean machine. You buy the machine, take it home and place it in a sunny place in your backyard/garden. As soon as the sun falls on the solar panels its batteries start to charge up and it inserts tubes down into the ground to collect water and minerals. The device sucks in air and separates carbon dioxide and uses the

energy obtained from sunlight to split the carbon from carbon device. The oxygen is vented as a 'waste' product.

Hydrogen, obtained from the water is combined with the carbon along with minerals from the earth to produce delicious jellybeans. The device also produces fuel oil and medicine. Another major selling point of the solar-powered jellybean machine is that you don't need to go back to the hardware store to buy another one as at regular intervals the device produces tiny pellets containing all the information required for a new machine. All you have to do is to find a bit of ground away from existing machine and place the pellet in the earth and a new machine will assemble itself so you can increase the supply of jellybeans.

This type of machine may seem very far-fetched. However, a 'machine' like this is already in existence and was designed and produced in ancient history – it's called an olive tree. Olives are used for food, cooking oil, seasoning, fuel for oil lamps and the leaves have medicinal properties. In the end, virtually all forms of energy on the earth are solar-powered – fossil fuels were produced by photosynthesis in the distant past, windmills and hydroelectric generators etc. ultimately receive energy from the sun. An olive tree as discussed above is a very efficient solar powered machine.

I think that a major industry in the kingdom will be recycling – glass, copper (from pipes and electrical wire), steel (cars and buildings). People will improvise a lot more – local engineering rather than large scale.

10. Agriculture

We now come to look at agriculture in more detail. I've attended lots of talks about the kingdom and I think everyone has mentioned the increased agricultural production. We are very familiar with verses which indicate this, a prime example being Psalm 72:16 "There shall be a handful of corn in the Earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." Psalm 72 is probably the passage of scripture most commonly read before lectures about the kingdom.

There are other verses that indirectly indicate increased agricultural production. Isaiah 2:4 "...and they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruninghooks." As we are all aware huge amounts of money is spent on arms. A recent figure I saw was US\$1.7 trillion. According to the UN it would take \$30 billion per year to end world hunger – that is less than 1.8% of annual world military spending! It is quite obvious that if the resources going into military spending were diverted into agriculture world hunger would be banished. This is going to happen in the kingdom.

In a previous chapter we saw that the first employees of the kingdom will be the bone buriers. Another group of kingdom employees will be people drafted into Israel to help in the agricultural effort. As we saw earlier a huge amount of food will be required to feed all people arriving and leaving 24/7. Isaiah 61:5-6 "And strangers shall stand and feed your flocks, and the sons of the alien shall be your plowmen and your vinedressers. But ye shall be named the Priests of the LORD: men shall call you the Ministers of our God: ye shall eat the riches of the Gentiles, and in their glory shall ye boast yourselves." I have heard it suggested that the non-Jews working in agricultural production in Israel could be the children of the saints. It is also possible that young people may go to Israel for work in the same way that they go to Kibbutzim today.

I am old enough to remember going to a grocery store in the UK in the early 1970's when biscuits were put into paper bags – there was none of the fancy packaging that we have today. A lot of food packaging is to conform to food hygiene regulations. I imagine that there will be a lot less food regulation in the kingdom. After all, the human race survived up until the time food packaging was introduced. Food packaging has a large impact on the environment although a lot is being done to mitigate the effects with recycling. I think that in the kingdom we will go back to the old ways with a low environmental impact.

Another verse predicts the increased fertility of the earth: Psalm 67:4-7 "O let the nations be glad and sing for joy: for thou shalt judge the people righteously, and govern the nations upon earth. Selah. Let the people praise thee, let all the people praise thee. Then shall the earth yield her increase; and God, even our own God, shall bless us. God shall bless us; and all the ends of the earth shall fear him". Reading between the lines, it seems that this verse is referring to the fact that the earth is under the curse introduced in the Garden of Eden suppressing the natural

bounty of the ground. Today a lot of agricultural production is lost due to plant diseases and pests while plants are in the ground and during storage. That won't happen in the kingdom.

Key to the increase in agricultural production in Israel will be the river emanating from beneath the altar in the temple. Today, and in the past, Israel is noted for just one major river – the River Jordan that has its source on the slopes of Mt. Hermon in Lebanon. This new source of water has a name: Psalm 65:9 “Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enriches it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.” No river today has the title *River of God* so clearly this must be a river of the future. The context of Psalm 65 is the future when all nations go to Jerusalem: Psalm 65:12 “Praise waiteth for thee, O God in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed. O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.” These verses are talking about Zion being the place in the future where all nations go.

More detail is given later in Psalm 65:10-13 “Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof. Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness. They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side. The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.” The picture presented here is of pastures choc-a-block with flocks and valleys covered with corn.

What we might call a ‘signature’ verse of the kingdom is Amos 9:13 “Behold, the days come saith the LORD, that the ploughman shall overtake the reaper, and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed; and the mountains shall drop sweet wine, and all the hills shall melt.” Although this verse is clearly meant to be metaphorical, I personally imagine ploughmen coming up being reapers and getting annoyed because they are in the way. This verse of course means that there will be such an abundance of food that it won't be possible to finish the harvest before it's time to prepare the ground for the next crop. The reverse problem usually exist today – food runs out before the next crop.

In Israel the treading of grapes occurred prior to the sowing of the cereal crops and so Amos 3:19 indicates that there will be so many grapes to crush that there won't be enough time to do it before it's time to sow seed. In view of the harvest time overshooting into ploughing time clearly there will be a superabundance of seeds.

Maintaining seed supplies is a major issue today. At the time of writing this section (Sep 2015) there was a story on CNN about a request obtain some seeds from the Global Seed Vault (GSV) on the Norwegian island of Svalbard for Syria. The GSV has been likened to a Noah's ark for seeds. The idea is that this will guard against the extinction of plants due to war, as in the case in Syria, and climate change.

There are other stresses. For example many farmers are upset by the behaviour of the Monsanto company who do not allow farmers to keep seed from the previous harvest. Farmers have to buy fresh seed from Monsanto each year.

Israel in the kingdom will be much greener than it is today and therefore will be able to support a large number of agricultural animals required to feed the large number of people in Israel from around the world throughout the year. This is apparent from Isaiah 65:10 “And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in...” Today the Valley of Achor, adjacent to the Dead Sea, is extremely barren and unable to support herds of animals. Pictures I have seen of the Achor Valley remind me of the lunar landscape.

Israel will be green because of water. This water will come from temple stream, what we might call *The River of Zion*. The effect of this river is found in Joel 3:18 “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk, and all the rivers of Judah shall flow with waters, and a fountain shall come forth of the house of the LORD, and shall water the valley of Shittim.” Elsewhere we read that vines will be cultivated in Israel. Vines thrive in regions of fairly low rainfall with irrigation. Good examples of this are the wine growing regions of California, and the Riverland in South Australia.

Another verse tells is about the end of famine – Ezekiel 36:29-30 “I will also save you from all your uncleanness: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you. And I will multiply the fruit of the tree, and the increase of the field, that ye shall receive no more reproach of famine upon you.” It is possible that famines will occur elsewhere in the world since there may be case where some nations refuse to send representatives to Jerusalem each year and so rain is withheld (Zechariah 14:17).

Another big issue today is the enormous amount of energy required to transport food around the world and consequent emission of greenhouse gases. I have read that one quarter of all greenhouse gas emissions is generated by the transport of food. In the kingdom food grown locally will be mostly eaten locally – there will be a much tighter coupling people and the land.

I was born in London and have lived around London before moving to Australia. Several years ago the Inner London Education Authority (ILEA) that existed from 1965 to 1990, set up a farm in London to take school students to so that they knew that milk came from cows etc. The reason for setting up this farm was because many children on London had never visited a farm.

Although it is clear that food will be grown locally, personally I think there will be scope for exotic, non-perishable spices to be on sale in Jerusalem – as the centre of the world, Jerusalem will be the best place for such a market.

11. Health in the kingdom

In this section of our exploration of life in the kingdom we will discuss the all-important topic of health. If you are young and healthy you probably aren't that concerned about health issues unless you happen to be a health worker, or a member of your family, or close friend, has or has had a serious health issue. However, for many people health is a major issue, especially for older members of the population. Health is a major problem for the Developed World as the proportion of older people increases compared to the young and per capita health care costs increase due to increased sophistication of medical procedures.

Health at the beginning of the kingdom

As in previous sections of our study, the transition period between the return of Jesus and the time when the kingdom is fully established, will be quite different. In this period staggering numbers of people will be injured from the Great Earthquake and the ensuing war and social unrest. Large numbers of people will be 'shell shocked' at the beginning of the kingdom and have psychological problems in coming to terms with the radical changes that have occurred in their lives.

How will Jesus and the saints deal with this problem? I don't know. I think it is going to take the wisdom of the Lord Jesus Christ to be able to navigate a course through this very difficult time.

Health in the kingdom

Verses of the Bible make it clear that in the kingdom people will be healthier and live much longer than today. People will get more exercise and eat healthier food which will immediately reduce the incidence of cardiovascular disease and cancer as well as minor ailments - digestive disorders, insomnia etc.). Lack of heavy industry and vehicles will greatly reduce physical injury.

Obesity is an increasingly major problem in the Western world today and has been implicated in a large number of illnesses, cardiovascular disease (especially high blood pressure) cancer and arthritis, to name but a few. Studies have shown that exercise is worth a whole bucket load of tablets. The increased activity of people in the kingdom will reduce obesity. It has been calculated that on average people today would need to walk 19 km per day to get the same amount of exercise as before the industrial revolution.

Studies have demonstrated a clear link between the incidence of mental illness and living in cities (The environment and schizophrenia, *Nature* **468**, 203-212. doi:10.1038/nature09563).

For example a study done in Denmark in 2001 looked at the relation between living in a rural area, provincial city and capital city between birth and age 15. People brought up in a rural area had a risk of developing schizophrenia less than 1%, those in a provincial city had a risk between 1.25 and 1.765 % and those in a capital city 2 – 2.5%.

One of the biggest killers today amongst young male Australians is suicide. A quieter life will reduce mental illness. Suicide is a particular problem in Japan, one of the most industrialised nations of the world. Not surprisingly, the largest selling prescription drug in the world today is Valium, a tranquilizer.

There is no doubt that the current pace of life contributes to many physical and psychological ailments. Stress is a factor in cardiovascular disease. The release of hormones such as adrenaline released as part of the ‘fight or flight’ response. This is responsible for the ‘butterflies’ in the stomach when you are about to run a race or maybe speak in public. The body gets ready for action. A problem today is that there are many situations where the body undergoes the fight or flight response without any physical exertion by the body. A prime example of this is being stressed out in a traffic jam. It is thought that the lack of physical exertion results in the deposition of plaque (sometimes referred to as ‘clag’) on the inner lining of arteries. Improved, diet, exercise, less stressful way of life, slower travel and sanitation will also contribute to an improvement in the public health of the mortal population.

Fewer pandemics?

The slower speed of travel in the kingdom will reduce or eliminate pandemics. Today, infectious diseases can spread very fast due to air travel. A recent example is Ebola.

Longevity

People will live much longer in the kingdom, Isaiah 65:20 “There will be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner being an hundred years old shall be accursed.” Of course this does not mean that people will still be in nappies up to age 100 but that if someone dies under 100 they will be a child in comparison to how long they could have lived.

Further on in Isaiah 65 we read “...for as the days of a tree are the days of my people, and mine elect shall long enjoy the work of their hands.” This clearly implies that people will live longer than they do now. Trees live for centuries and sometimes even longer. From the Genesis record we discover that the longest natural lifespan is just short of 1,000 years – Methuselah lived for 969 years. Whatever happened after the flood to shorten the average lifespan will be reversed. The more peaceful way of life in the kingdom will also probably contribute to longevity.

It is possible that people will be more active in old age, maybe along the lines of Moses. Moses began his life’s work at 80! The first 80 years were training. Deuteronomy 34:7 “And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.” Since the kingdom will last for a thousand years and people will live up to this time it follows that once the old people from the generation that enter the kingdom has died out there

won't be any old people until about seven centuries into the kingdom. Aged care facilities won't be needed for most of the kingdom.

There are other issues that relate to the increased longevity in the kingdom. For example, people are going to be married for very much longer than they are today. If a man and women are to remain married for say 700 years then it is highly advisable to get it right! Maybe we or certain of the mortals will be involved in counselling before marriage. Maybe with our insight into peoples' minds (as Jesus had) we will be able to advise people against marriage in certain situations. Maybe there will be stricter guidelines on courtship than there are today. Maybe two people know that they are not really suited, but can't get out of the situation. Maybe we will be more up front in these situations and help them to come to the correct decision about their future.

Herbal remedies

A forest of trees will grow on either side of the River of Life flowing from the temple down to the Arabah. These trees will be for the healing of the nations, as we read in Ezekiel 47:12 "And by the river upon the bank thereof, on this side and on that side, shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed; it shall bring forth new fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine." This verse tells us that there will be a forest of trees on either side of the river emanating from the temple stretching all the way down to the Live Sea. Not only will these trees produce fruit for eating but the leaves will have healing properties.

We are told about the 'healing forest' in another place – Revelation 22:1-2 "And he shewed me a pure river of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

Many drugs in use today come from plants and there are probably many more. Examples are *digitalis* from the Foxglove and the anti-cancer drug *vincristine* obtained from a Madagascan orchid. Natural drugs (herbal remedies, traditional medicines) have fewer side effects than most modern drugs. Maybe there will be herbal doctors in the kingdom. It is possible that many of the herbal medicines that will be used in the kingdom exist today in various parts of the world.

Miraculous healing

Miraculous healing will also take place, Isaiah 35:5,6. This will probably be for situations where surgery would be required, if something could be done about the condition. Maybe people will have to go to Jerusalem to be physically healed. The healing leaves effectively means that Jerusalem will be a medical centre of the world as well. Perhaps this will teach the nations that they have to go to Jerusalem (the source of spiritual leadership ("the law shall go forth from Jerusalem, and the word from Zion")) It may be that the changes required to increase longevity will also result in fewer hereditary diseases.

Healthier lifestyle

Better way of life in the kingdom - agricultural communities will get more exercise, healthier food which will immediately reduce the incidence of cardiovascular disease and cancer. (And will reduce minor ailments – digestive disorders, insomnia etc.). Lack of heavy industry and vehicles will greatly reduce physical injury.

Less obesity

Obesity is an increasingly major problem in the Western world today and has been implicated in a large number of illnesses, cardiovascular disease (especially high blood pressure) cancer and arthritis, to name but a few. Studies have shown that exercise is worth a whole bucket load of tablets. The increased activity of people in the kingdom will reduce obesity. It has been calculated that on average people today would need to walk 19 km per day to get the same amount of exercise as before the industrial revolution.

Better mental health

A quieter life will reduce mental illness (NB one of the biggest killers today amongst young male Australians is suicide). There was a report on the news the other day about the 38% increase in suicides in Japan compared to this time last year accounting for 27,000 deaths. The largest selling prescription drug in the world today is vallium.

Less stress

There is no doubt that the current pace of life contributes to many physical and psychological ailments. Stress is a factor in cardiovascular disease - for example the release of hormones such as adrenaline released as part of the ‘fight or flight’ response. This is responsible for the ‘butterflies’ in the stomach when you are about to run a race or maybe speak in public. The body gets ready for action. A problem today is that there are many situations where the body undergoes the fight or flight response without any physical exertion by the body. A prime example of this is being stressed out in a traffic jam. It is thought that the lack of physical exertion results in the deposition of plaque (sometimes referred to as ‘clag’) on the inner lining of arteries.

Improvements in public health

In many parts of the world today, the general health of the population could be improved by very basic improvements in sanitation. This is a major factor in facilitating the spread of communicable diseases – Ebola being a recent example. I was shocked to learn at school that prior to the Great Plague in London, drinking water was collected downstream from the main London sewer outlet into the River Thames. I thought how come they didn’t know that this would cause major health problems? It was not until the time of John Snow that the medical discipline of epidemiology came into existence and people began to understand how communicable diseases are transmitted.

Fewer pandemics

The slower speed of travel in the kingdom will reduce or eliminate pandemics. Today, infectious diseases can spread very fast due to air travel. Every year epidemiologists go from the Centre for Disease Control (CDC) Atlanta, Georgia, USA over to China to find out about the latest flue, which invariably finds its way to the US. It is possible that the 'leaf doctors' based in Israel will be on the look-out for people visiting Israel with an infectious diseases and treat them before a major problem develops.

Longevity

People will live much longer, Isaiah 65:20,22. There will be some kind of change to the mortals, or rather a reversal of what has happened since the flood. However, the way of life in the kingdom may well be a contributory factor to longevity and health.

There are other issues that relate to the increased longevity in the kingdom. For example, people are going to be married for very much longer than they are today. If a man and women are to remain married for say 700 years then it is highly advisable to get it right! Maybe we or certain of the mortals will be involved in counselling before marriage. Maybe with our insight into peoples' minds (as Jesus had) we will be able to advise people against marriage in certain situations. Maybe there will be stricter guidelines on courtship than there are today. Maybe two people know that they are not really suited, but can't get out of the situation. Maybe we will be more up front in these situations and help them to come to the correct decision about their future.

No more infant deaths?

Incredibly, we can conclude from Isaiah 65:20 that there will be no infant deaths - no more sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS) or premature babies that die due to conditions such as respiratory distress syndrome (RDS). From this we can also infer that fatal congenital conditions will be eradicated. What medical science has laboured for decades to overcome, God will correct overnight. For some of the present population of the world who survive into the kingdom, the healthcare that they receive in the kingdom will be the first that they have ever received!

In the kingdom people will not be as familiar with human death. It is possible that people will live for several centuries before going to a funeral. We know that animal sacrifices will exist in the kingdom which some of us have difficulty in coming to terms with. A positive slant to this is that animal sacrifices will be very important in teaching people about mortality in the kingdom.

In the second study about the return of Jesus I spoke of my children's educational experience when their granny died (or as my daughter would tell you – went into a deep sleep that only God and Jesus can wake her from). Today, funerals can be important preaching events. In a large number of cases this is the only time that unbelievers come into contact with the gospel message about the return of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead.

If we counted the number of people with little knowledge of the gospel message who attend funerals where the gospel is preached then the number would probably far outstrip the number of people who attend Bible seminars, lectures and other preaching events etc. In 2007 I attended a funeral of a close friend. There were 520 people at the funeral including a large number of staff from the hospital where my friend worked. The talk at the funeral was basically about preaching the gospel. In fact it so happened that my friend had made a passing comment that he wanted his funeral to be a preaching event even although at the time there was no indication that he would die in tragic circumstances.

12. Daily life in the kingdom

What will everyday life be like in the kingdom? Will it be all blue skies, gardening, Bible study and hymn singing? We have already touched on aspects of life in the kingdom in our previous studies, i.e. travel, trade, environment, agriculture, health, and education. In this section we will attempt to bring everything together into a more complete picture. We will also consider aspects of life in the kingdom we have not yet dealt with – i.e. entertainment (the ‘work-life balance’), law and order, security etc.

It is very clear from a text in Isaiah that life in the kingdom will be very different from life today. In whatever country we live in now, in the Developed or Developing World, life will be different in the kingdom. Maybe life in the kingdom won’t be so different for those who currently live in the Developing World in terms of everyday life, but it will still be different. The relevant text in Isaiah is: “For, Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind.” (Isaiah 65:17-15).

The first thing to note is that this does not mean that the physical heavens and earth will be replaced in the kingdom but rather that the structure of society in terms of the rulers and the ruled will be totally different from the world in which we live today. Also, at first sight we might think that this verse says that people will forget the present world and won’t even think about it. Of course, people born in the kingdom won’t be able to remember what the world was like before because they won’t have been there. However, we will of course be able to remember – we wouldn’t be us if we couldn’t.

The Hebrew translation of the last part of Isaiah 65:17 is very interesting – it reads “come upon the heart”. In other words, people will know about life before the kingdom but won’t desire it. I imagine books being available in the kingdom that will tell people what life was like before the kingdom. Imagine showing some young people pictures of highways completely snarled up with cars not moving for several hours. From the perspective of the kingdom I think that many of the things that we take for granted now are going to seem totally ridiculous.

Another way of thinking about life in the kingdom is to list the bad points of life today and expunge them from our picture of the kingdom. However, what has been removed needs replacing. People will not sit and do nothing. Our list of current negative behaviours would probably include drug trafficking and abuse, prostitution, pornography in all its forms, pandemics, child abuse, domestic violence, graffiti, blasphemous language and music, swearing, organised crime, gang warfare, traffic jams, financial crises, pollution, alcohol fuelled violence etc. etc. etc.

Technology in the kingdom

An important subject to discuss at this stage is what level of technology is appropriate for the kingdom, as this will have a direct bearing on the type of work people will do in the kingdom and entertainment.

Many people are pinning their hopes on science and engineering to avert disaster. People talk about ‘GRAIN’ technologies – Genetic engineering, Robots, Artificial Intelligence and Nanotechnology. Research is being conducted to develop renewable energy sources – solar power, wind-power, wave-power, biofuels etc. Will the current pace of progress be maintained in the kingdom?

It is possible that some of the new technologies will exist in the kingdom. However, it is unlikely that solar panels will exist for more than a few decades if there is not the industrial base to support the manufacture. The efficiency of photovoltaic cells reduces with time and therefore after a few decades won't be useable. It is probable that people will have solar hot water systems as these are very low technology. People might also construct their own wind-power generators and hydroelectric power units. Electric generators are relatively low technology requiring just magnets and copper wires. A lot of magnets and copper wire will be left over from the present civilisation. However, I personally think that the main source of power in the kingdom will be wood fires for cooking and oil lamps and candles for lighting. This is really solar power since ultimately the energy of all living things on the surface of the Earth comes from the Sun.

A slower pace of life

Maybe we often have a simplistic vision of everyday life in the kingdom and imagine someone sitting under a fig tree for most of the year except, when they travel to Jerusalem. Of course, this picture of the kingdom is scriptural as there is a verse that says this (“...they shall sit every man under his vine and under his own fig tree.” Micah 4:4). However, this verse is clearly to be meant to be symbolic since there will be more to life than just sitting under a tree. This verse indicates a more tranquil way of life with people taking time to contemplate the world sitting under a fruit tree on their property. So what will people do? How will they be entertained?

Another major difference between the current world and the world of the kingdom will be the slower changes to the built environment. Most of us have probably experienced going back to a town where we used to live and been very disappointed at the changes, for example old building may have been demolished and new ones put in their place. I like to imagine towns

and villages staying more or less the same throughout the kingdom, with the same family running a shop or business for several centuries. This can happen today, but is the exception rather than the rule.

Life today is all about packing in as much as you can. In spite of all the labour-saving devices – washing machines, vacuum cleaners, dishwashers, microwave ovens, internet, mobile phones, life has never been busier, and the pace even seems to be increasing. From the perspective of a typical person today the picture of the kingdom painted in this study may seem to be quite boring. How will people survive without TV, radio, mobile phones, the internet etc? Is it possible to be happy without these things? Will people get bored in the kingdom? Today people have got to be continuously entertained even when travelling – hence the enormous demand for portable personal entertainment products, e.g. iPods, iPads, iPhones for music and films, games, text messaging, email, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube etc), in-car DVD players, etc. It is probably true to say that most people very rarely sit down to just think – there simply isn't enough time.

The following is a quote from a small book that I have at home which is part of a series called *The Thinkers Library* that strives to summarise what we might call the 'big picture' topics of today. I think that you will agree that it would be difficult to write something better that describes today's world.

In these strenuous days it becomes increasingly difficult to find time for serious reading. Material problems demand more and more of our attention, and few people enjoy the leisure needed for the study of the books that embody the deeper wisdom of our own and earlier ages. On the other hand, never before was there a greater need for quiet reflective thought. Never before was there a more general and insistent demand for intellectual guidance.

I was shocked when I turned to the front of the book to find out when it was written and discovered that it was 1927! What would the writer of the above comments have to say about the world of today over 90 years later?

The hectic pace of life in the western world is called the 'rat race', the idea being taken from the picture of a lab rat running on a wheel in a cage - running fast but going nowhere. We sometimes come across the phrase "Stop the world, I want to get off!" A movement called the slow movement has arisen to promote a quieter life.

Some people leave the rat race for a slower pace of life, such people are known as 'sea changers'. These people often leave their jobs and move out of a city and live a quieter life. At the beginning of the kingdom every person on the planet is going to be a sea changer whether they want it or not.

A few years ago I heard a report on the radio in which a BBC reporter interviewed the owner of a travel book shop in Notting Hill in London being forced to close due to lack of business. The owner said that two books shops a week are closing in the UK. One reason for the reduction in book sales is the rise of the eBook, but another reason is that fewer people are reading books.

Entertainment

Life for the mortal population in the kingdom will not be all work and worship. So what will entertainment be like? As we saw earlier, the events surrounding the return of Jesus will dismantle the infrastructure of the kingdom of men. This will in effect make all electronic devices obsolete. Of what use is a DVD with no player? You can't even look at the surface of the disc under a microscope and see any pictures – as you could for example with a strip of film. Most people now have their photos and video in digital format on a computer – these will all be gone in the kingdom. What's the use of music on an iPod with no power?

Paradoxically, the technological progress that is occurring now will accelerate the disappearance of today's entertainment devices. A lot of evil material will also be lost which is a good thing. Judging by various news reports etc, a lot of pornographic material is now available in electronic form on the internet as well as on paper. Governments are clearly aware of this problem and the very real potential of the damage that this material can do to the minds of children and adults.

An interesting side-effect will be the preservation of old material – books and written music. Classical musical instruments – piano, violin, trumpet etc don't need any power to work, apart from that supplied by the musician. Scores from classical pieces of music will still be available in the kingdom. So if someone feels like playing the Moonlight sonata at some point in the kingdom they can do so. Since we are now discussing music this naturally brings us onto the subject of entertainment in the kingdom. There will certainly be plenty of time for entertainment.

Of course people will be studying their Bibles and the saints will be involved in teaching people about God. People will be busy with activity during the day – as we shall discuss in a few moments, but at night they will come home to their families. Clearly, not so much effort will be required to grow food with the curse lifted off the ground, which will free up time. In the so-called Western world we are used to going off to work in the morning and coming home in the evening – and nearly everybody has to travel to work, shops and school etc.

The leisure activities that people will be involved in the kingdom will be reading, writing, drawing, painting, playing and writing music, singing, dancing, walking, talking, gardening, observing nature, astronomy, sport. I've left out crafts from this list as these are discussed in the section about work.

Some readers may question the inclusion of dancing in a list of kingdom leisure activities. Although of course there are problems with some types of dancing and associated ungodly music, there's nothing wrong with other sorts – e.g. ballet and ballroom dancing. In the pre-radio and pre-TV days the major entertainment for young people was dancing and in many cases that was how they met partners. Personally, I can't see anything wrong with young (and older) people dancing to classical music. Surely this is a good way (but by no means the only way) for young people to meet each other and form relationships. And being together like this reduces the tendency to go off into dark corners where it is very easy for things to go too far.

Another possible form of entertainment in the kingdom will be community plays. A number of years ago I was staying with close friends in South Wales, UK. On the Saturday night we went out to what we might call a town pantomime, *The Sleeping Beauty*. As the pantomime progressed one of my friends pointed out the real people behind the various characters - the butcher, the baker etc. The wicked witch worked in the town pharmacy. One section I remember clearly was when the children were hissing at the wicked witch who spun round and threatened to come baby-sitting - a collective gasp rung out from all the children! I think I said to my friends “they really believe it!”

In the kingdom, with smaller communities maybe we can envisage local plays on Biblical themes. Imagine Daniel in the lions’ den being acted out with the help of real lions - which will be quite possible in the kingdom, as they will be totally safe. Music will clearly be part of life in the kingdom, but there is no doubt that the main emphasis will be on giving glory to God. This completely discounts the God dishonouring and vacuous pop songs of today. As in Solomon’s reign, a type of the kingdom of God, there were singers in the temple – 1 Kings 10:12: “And the king made of the almug trees pillars for the king’s house, harps also and psalteries for singers...”, there will be singers in the new temple – Ezekiel 40:44 “And without the inner gate were the chambers of the singers...”

Will big-name and big money sport exist in the kingdom? I don’t think so. Here in Australia sport is followed with a religious fervour and therefore comes under the category of idolatry, to use its proper scriptural name. (As I once saw on a T-shirt: ‘Cricket is not a matter of life and death - it’s more important than that’). There is nothing wrong with sport if it is kept in its proper place. It is great fun playing sport with our children at home, or during ecclesial or Bible school activities.

As we have seen in the section on the education of children in the kingdom, childhood is a very important time. What kind of toys will children play with? Many modern toys are not very educational and engender violent tendencies. How many times have children played with the box that the toy came in rather than the toy!

A view prevalent today is that you’ve got to have a lot of money to be happy. The more money you’ve got the happier you’ll be. I once saw an ornamental tile on sale in a gift shop that read: “All I ask is the chance to prove that money can’t make me happy.”

A number of years ago I read a very interesting article in the London Evening Standard that addressed this issue. The newspaper gave a mission to two of their young reporters. On one night they had to have the most expensive night out possible. A chauffeur driven limousine took them to an upmarket restaurant followed by a trip to the opera and then home in the limousine. The total cost of the night was in excess of US\$1,000! The next night the reporters cycled to an underground station, went to a cheap Chinese restaurant and then on to a cinema. The total cost of this night out was a few tens of dollars. The conclusion of this experiment was that the cheaper night out was the most enjoyable!

In the kingdom there will be an enormous amount of scope for observing nature. Imagine children drawing pictures. Travelling to and from Jerusalem will be an enormous educational experience for children. I imagine them writing journals describing their experiences, complete with pictures and maps.

When I worked in London, one of my favourite recreations was to spend about two hours walking across London from the Barbican in the East to Victoria Station on the west where I would get a train home. On the way I would pass through Covent Garden that was full of street performers. It was great entertainment and cost absolutely nothing – apart from giving a tip when a hat was passed around. When I've visited other cities around the world I've done the same kind of thing (although I have accidentally entered areas that necessitated a hasty exit). You see far more than any on any tour bus.

Some very simple things in life that cost absolutely nothing can produce endless entertainment. Speaking personally, I never ever get tired of looking at the stars and will look up at the sky every night. I can also look at a fire burning for hours on end – I can quite understand why an outdoor fire is called 'bush television' in Australia.

Sometimes we experience kingdom style activities in this present world. For example, in Easter 2007 we were visiting the Glenlock Bible Camp in South Australia. One night I went out with a group of fathers, and children including three of my own to see if we could spot any wildlife. We all had torches varying in size from small children's torches and spotting lamps – we were looking for wildlife – some small frogs were found and a yabbie (a freshwater lobster). The scenery was amazing – the very dark sky, brilliant stars – the Milky Way could be seen right down to just above the horizon – flickering camp fires and lights, flashing torches – a rich visual experience. One of the older girls on the trek had a windup torch – maybe this kind of technology could find some use in the kingdom – a form of very low-tech electric lighting – no batteries required.

Work

People will need to work in the kingdom. As we have seen in the agriculture section of this book, it will be very easy to grow food in the kingdom, but people will still need to work in the field of agriculture, for example to pick fruit, tread grapes, make wine, grind corn, bake bread etc.

In many Third World Countries' people live, work and go to school locally. In many parts of the world the work day is divided by a siesta period in which people sleep for a few hours in the middle of the day and then carry on into the evening and finally have dinner from 9 pm onwards and after dinner drink coffee and talk until midnight and beyond. There's no reason why this way of life should not continue into the kingdom, and may even be expanded.

Of course this approach can only work if people don't have to large distances – just imagine how this would work in a modern city – e.g. Sydney, London, New York etc – at lunchtime

everyone stops work, eats lunch, switch on their answer phone (“Sorry, I’m on my siesta right now – please leave a message”), unroll their sleeping back and sleep under their desk while the emails pile up over the next two hours.

The world of the kingdom will be much less stressful on marriages and families than the world today. In the Developed World, it is entirely normal for husband and wife to both work. In the ensuing discussion I am not passing judgement on working mothers. In today’s world it is often essential for both parents to work for financial survival. I’m just raising issues I consider relevant to our discussion of life in the kingdom.

My father-in-law related an interesting story to be about counselling one of the female workers he managed at work who was a stressed out working mother. They sat down together and went through the finances and ascertained that after the extra costs associated with a mother being out to work, e.g. work clothing, travel, child care, take away meals (due to both partners being too tired to cook at the end of the day) just \$10 was left over. In other words, this mother was working for just \$2 per day and receiving a whole lot of stress as well! The obvious question was asked at the end of this exercise. Was it all worth it?

Although, of course, this situation does not apply to all working mothers it is by no means uncommon. In many cases the household income is greatly enhanced by a working mother – in some cases this money is required just for the family to survive – in other cases it is to provide for luxuries that could not otherwise be afforded without the additional income. The question could be asked – are these luxuries worth the extra stress associated with work? The Western world is well set up to cater for working mothers – hence the proliferation of child-care centres – where we live in the northern suburbs of Brisbane, they seem to be as ubiquitous as fast-food outlets. Apparently, children are going to child care centres as early as six weeks old and stay there until they go to school and so never experience a normal home life! Another issue that should be considered is that many extramarital affairs start at work many of which result in a break-up of one or two marriages.

It is my view that mothers will not go out to work in the kingdom. Mothers will stay at home looking after their children and when the children no longer need looking after or have left home will be engaged in home-craft style activities and visiting people. If people are to live and work locally, this restricts what is possible.

A list of ‘kingdom careers might include farmer, carpenter, plumber, glass blower, potter, tiler, brick maker, stone mason, cartwright, blacksmith, musical instrument maker, clothes maker, dyer, shipbuilder, shopkeeper etc. These are all activities that can be conducted at a local level without the need of giant multinational companies. There won’t be the enormous pressure to increase profits.

The expertise for some of the jobs in the above list of kingdom jobs is very rare today - stone mason for example. It is possible that at the beginning of the kingdom, the only source of knowledge for some crafts will reside in the minds of the saints. We might imagine Lydia

resurrecting the purple dye trade in the eastern Mediterranean, teaching people how to collect the Murex shellfish, dissect out the hypobranchial gland, extract the secretion and boil the liquid down to the a concentrated dye known as Tyrian purple.

Tyrian purple is unusual in that the intensity of the colour actually improves with age and sunlight – a very appropriate dye for the kingdom! In ancient times, Tyrian purple dye was worth 10 times its weight in gold. Garments dyed with Tyrian purple were only worn by the very rich, for example, members of the Roman imperial family. Maybe in the kingdom a lot more people will wear Tyrian purple clothes. We might imagine people who travel to Jerusalem also fitting in a trip to the markets of Tyre to buy Tyrian purple garments to take home.

In today's world there is very little time for thinking. If someone is sitting down at work and thinking – maybe they are thinking about how to perform their job more efficiently – and others see them they will be perceived as 'slackers'. Because thinking can't be seen it is assumed it is not happening. It is quite possible that a few hours thought could save months of futile work! A good example of someone meditating is Abraham. Genesis 18:1: "And the LORD appeared unto him [Abraham] in the plains of Mamre: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day." In today's terms Abraham would probably be a billionaire. I don't know much about billionaires but I imagine that today a billionaire would be out at a 'power lunch' rather than sitting down doing nothing.

In the kingdom, many prestigious professions are going to disappear or change radically. For example there will be no need for the legal professions, lawyers, barristers and judges. In the kingdom there will be no doubt whether or not a crime has been committed. It is clear from the gospel records that Jesus could read peoples' minds. The saints will be able to read minds as well. Isaiah 11:3 "...he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears. But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked." In OT times the legal system was combined with the priesthood, and so will it be the case again in the kingdom. (Revelation 5:10 "And hast made us kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.").

Communication

Today, people increasingly rely on electronic media and social networking to communicate. In the kingdom, the main media of communication will be as they were before the digital revolution - reading, writing, listening and speaking. A point that may be lost on the younger generation is that the written word is a very powerful medium. It is possible to convey information about all the senses, for example, sight, hearing, smell, touch, temperature, taste. It is possible to describe different periods in history with ease. By exercising the imagination in conjunction with the written word it is possible to immerse yourself in the world created in a book.

Imagine the opportunities for conversation with different people. People traveling to and from Jerusalem may literally meet people from every single country in the world. Think of the possibilities for learning from other people, all the interesting stories to be told and listened to.

At first, the end of digital communication will be difficult to cope with. Young people find it difficult to imagine how people survived before mobile phones. People feel vulnerable if they go out without a mobile phone. In the ‘old days’ before driving somewhere the route would be worked out. Nowadays people rely on a mobile phone, but even this is becoming obsolete with the increasing ubiquity of GPS navigation units. It is possible that soon people will lose the ability to read maps in the same way that mental arithmetic ability declined after the introduction of the calculator. In this current age there has been a noticeable decline in people’s ability to communicate through the written word. Articles have appeared on school students writing essays in the same way that they write text messages, for example “great” might be spelt “gr8”. In 2011, I marked a first year university exam paper with an entire phrase written like a text message.

People who research the way people interact electronically have noticed a number of trends. For example many people now decide on what they think about something on the basis of what their peer group thinks rather than thinking through the issues for themselves. Before the days of mobile connectivity people were often on their own and so had to resolve issues and problems on their own, or at least put the decision on hold until they had time to discuss it with someone. People now expect quick feedback from their peers so that they can form an opinion. As one commentator has said “A question for us all: are we leaving enough time to take one’s time” (a quote from Sherry Turkle, Professor of Social Studies of Science and Technology, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA.) The implied answer to this question is clearly no.”

Family life

Family life is under severe pressure at the present time. Many consider the institution to be archaic, this attitude goes along with the prevailing view that the *patriarchal* society is an OT institution and it is time to move on to a more enlightened society. In the Western world today it is very rare to find the ‘ideal’ extended family. Often grandparents are not available to pass on valuable advice to parents. It is well known that single families can lead to a lot of problems. In spite of this there are cases of children being brought up very well in single parent families.

Relationships that are immoral will not be allowed to exist in the kingdom. What about polygamy? This was allowed by God in Old Testament times and so was not a sin. Notable examples of men with more than one wife at a time are Abraham and David that we know are going to be in the kingdom. However, if we subscribe to the view (which I do) that in the kingdom the whole population of the world will be “in the truth” then it does not seem unreasonable to assume that the New Testament instruction that bishops should be the husband of one wife should apply in the kingdom.

There is no need to emphasise the importance of family life for the mortal population in the kingdom. God devised the institution of marriage for procreation and for the physical and spiritual nurture of children. God's ultimate purpose is to fill this Earth with men and woman that reflect His glory. Family life will play an important part in effecting this purpose.

The breakdown of marriage in many parts of the world has reached epic proportions today. If this trend continues into the kingdom it will result in people having to remain single for centuries. What can be done to ensure greater marriage stability in the kingdom? The reasons for marriage breakdown are many and varied and cannot possibly be discussed in any detail here. However, a few of the well-known reasons relate to this current discussion about marriage in the kingdom.

Today a large part of the problem is that partners have unrealistic expectations of each other. People's idea of romance is strongly influenced by the entertainment media, which, in many cases does not dwell on the mundane aspects of married life – e.g. getting up at all hours of the night looking after sick children etc.

Another reason is that separation is now much easier than in the past and is no longer a stigma. In showbiz circles marriage for life is almost unheard of. The internet and mobile phones make elicit relationships a lot easier. With so many women at work there is a lot more chance of elicit relationships developing than there used to be when the workforce was predominantly male. (I am not passing judgement on working mothers – just stating facts).

Yet another reason is that people do not know each other well enough before getting married. In some parts of the world this problem is rectified by the arranged marriage system. This is frowned on in the Western world. However people have misconceptions about how arranged marriages work. When I worked in London several years ago I had a student of Asian extraction who had an arranged marriage. He explained in detail how the system worked.

He told me that one day his parents approached him to say that they had been in discussion with another family who had an eligible daughter whom they would like him to meet. He agreed and a meeting was arranged in a motorway service station with representatives of both families in attendance. My student said that he saw the girl from a distance and was given the choice of whether to speak with her or not. He said yes and went over to talk with her.

They decided that they would carry on meeting each other and continued to do so at regular intervals. They 'went out' as young people do but they never went alone – they went with a chaperone from one or both families – e.g. an older sibling. They were eventually married and were very happy. They were not forced into marriage but were free to back out at any stage.

In the UK, Asian weddings are enormous, with several thousand guests in some cases. Apparently, a lot of wheeling and dealing goes on during weddings initiating arranged marriages. Marriages are usually arranged between families of similar social status. Apparently,

in arranged marriages love develops over a period of time. This system is criticised by many in the West, but arranged marriages experience a far lower divorce rate.

We can imagine the strife that would result if this system were imposed on the young people of today! However, with what we know about human nature, this system is eminently sensible. There is no provision for getting into trouble late at night. This kind of system would be very suitable for the kingdom. It is possible that the saints will be involved in guiding young people contemplating marriage. In some cases if it is obvious that two people are incompatible they may be strongly advised against going ahead with marriage. In the kingdom we may well see much longer courtships than today. There will be time. Many people borne in the kingdom will never die and some who are married at the beginning of the kingdom may be married for nearly one thousand years.

Of course, in the kingdom, human nature will be no different from today and therefore without a shadow of a doubt marriage problems will occur in the kingdom. However, the much slower pace of life without all the distractions of today's world will make it much easier to sort out marriage problems. Another thing to consider is the enormous wealth of experience amongst the saints in dealing with marriage problems – either through being involved in marriage counselling or having experienced difficulties themselves.

In the kingdom there will be a lot of opportunity for young people from all over the world to get married. This will happen mostly when travelling to and from Israel and when staying in Jerusalem. Since the whole world is going to be in the truth the issue of marrying out of the truth can't exist – except maybe at the end of the millennium (more about that in the next chapter).

Shopping

In the Developed World there have never been so many things to buy. Almost anything can be bought and sold on eBay. The average wage in Australia has increased threefold since the 1950's in real terms – i.e. taking inflation into account. Maybe the best way of appreciating this increase is to consider the situation if wages were suddenly increased by three times today. Most people would be extremely happy and consider that all their financial problems were solved. However, the paradox of today is that people do not feel as if they are better off.

People will of course need to go shopping in the kingdom to purchase the things required for everyday life – e.g. food, pots, pans, tables and chairs etc. In Australia today people are spending an increasing amount of time shopping, some commentators are now saying that consumerism is a new religion. Professor Ian Lowe, president of the Australian Conservation Foundation said the following words when speaking at the National Press Club, Canberra in August 2006: “*Consumerism is now our unofficial national religion, with ever larger shopping centres being built so we can worship seven days a week.*” Over the last few years the retail industry has been under pressure with the rise of purchases over the internet – but this is still shopping.

There is every expectation that this increase in real wealth will increase. How much do people need to be satisfied? The Biblical answer than no amount of money is ever enough! We read in Ecclesiastes 5:10: “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this also is vanity.” This verse is interesting. It says there are two facets to “the love of money”. There are those that love money for its own sake and those who love material possessions. There are some people with very little money and some with enormous wealth who are nevertheless satisfied, and *vice versa*.

A few months ago I attended a guest lecture at the university where I work. The speaker was Prof. Ian Lowe, emeritus professor of environmental science at Griffith University, Brisbane (quoted above). His message from an environmental point of view was that people need to foster a spiritual dimension to their lives so that they are not reliant on the acquisition of material things to find fulfilment in life. The developed world is following an unsustainable course at this present time.

Prof Ian Lowe mentioned that 25 years ago in Queensland the average person aspired to have a three-bedroom house, with a car and a garage to put it in. As we might imagine, people are no longer satisfied with this ‘dream’ home. Prof Ian Lowe pointed out that the average person now aspires to have a five-bedroom house, a home cinema, a four-wheel drive, jetskis, etc. And of course a single garage is far too small to house the acquired objects and so at least a double or triple is required. Knowing what we do about human nature, we can confidently predict that in the future five bedrooms will no longer be considered adequate, even although the average household now contains 2.2 people.

The size of housing blocks has not kept pace with the increase in house size. Houses now fill more of the land area. Some commentators have pointed out that with such an increase in house sizes people will need to trade their ride-on mowers for ride-on vacuum cleaners! Whole estates of these large houses have sprung-up with hardly any space between houses. A wonderful word has been coined to describe these houses – MacMansions – as in MacDonalds.

In the kingdom people will fill their days with many activities and certainly will not be bored. Did people living in the Renaissance period in Florence, Padua and Venice in northern Italy ever get bored? If we could go back in time (or simply speak to someone from that period in the kingdom) they would probably make the same complaint of people today that they did not have enough time to do everything they wanted to do!

13. The end and beyond

We now come to the end of the kingdom. At the end of the thousand years the present era is going to seem very remote – like looking back to AD 1,000 from today. Throughout most of the millennium the condition of mankind will be close to ideal – as ideal as it can be with human nature still in existence. The reason for this condition will be because of the very tight restraint placed on mankind, described symbolically in Revelation 20:1-3 “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him in the bottomless pit, and shut him up, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season.”

The words of this passage are evocative of the orthodox picture of the Devil as a supernatural agent of evil, complete with horns, pitch fork and forked tail being thrown out of heaven down into a dark pit and a heavy manhole cover dragged over the top and secured by a large padlock. However, since it can be proved from scripture that the Devil is not an actual person but an abstraction that can best be described as ‘ungodly human desires’ we need to interpret these verses symbolically.

The rebellion at the end of the millennium

During the kingdom a lid will be placed on human affairs in the kingdom – there will be no war, and murder out of malice will be extremely rare. Although people will still have free will in the kingdom there will be a large disincentive against overt sin. As we saw earlier, the saints will have mind-sight and so will be able to warn people about what they are contemplating an ungodly path – Isaiah 30:21 “And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left”

Free will is an essential condition for the development of godly characters. So, at the end of the millennium there will be a final, global test of free will. This period is described in the verses above – at the end of the 1,000 years the restraint will be removed for a short period. This will determine the true worshippers of God and those who are just doing it because they have to.

We have more detail about the removal of restraint in Revelation 20:7-9 “And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, And shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle: the number of whom is as the sand of the sea. And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city: and fire came down from God from heaven, and devoured them.”

There are a number of pieces of important information in these verses. The effect of the release of Satan is global – all nations are deceived. An army under the leadership of two entities called

Gog and Magog are recruited from all over the world – and there are lots of them. They go up to Jerusalem. At first sight we might think that this is a parallel account of the invasion of Israel described in Ezekiel 38. However, this cannot be the invasion described in Revelation 20. In Ezekiel 38 the Gogian army invades from the north and is confronted by a southern army before being destroyed by God. In Revelation 20, the army comes from the “four quarters”, i.e. from all points of the compass. There is no opposing southern force before the army is destroyed. There are of course similarities between the two invasions, which is why Gog and Magog are mentioned.

From the description of the invasion of Jerusalem at the end of the 1,000 years we can infer that the saints have withdrawn to Jerusalem. We can imagine that at first the withdrawal will go unnoticed, but then people will start asking questions. Were the saints actually mortal and only pretending to be immortal? Have the saints been inflicted by some sort of disease and died off? People around the world will work out that the best place to go to find answers is Jerusalem.

However, it is clear that the expedition organised to Jerusalem is not a fact finding mission but rather has malicious intent. No doubt beforehand people will discover that the saints are holed up in Jerusalem. Word travels around the world and a rebellious coalition forms.

The fact that an organised rebellion takes place suggests that an efficient communication will exist to synchronise and attack. People may search through ancient archives to find out how to build computers and networks – and weapons. Personally, I think it unlikely that people will arrive at Jerusalem with pitchforks.

An intriguing question is what will possess people to rebel after the 1,000 year beneficent reign of Christ and the saints? Human nature. Maybe we can be permitted to speculate on what might lead to the invasion. Well, at a basic level, people don't like the idea of other people ruling over them. People aspire to be the master of their own destiny. They will now see a chance of throwing off what they now perceive to be an oppressive government.

The exact sentiment is described in the Psalms – although primarily referring to the beginning of the kingdom it is apposite to the rebellion at the end – Psalm 2:1-3 “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.” I think that the reference to Gog and Magog in Revelation 20 indicates that the nations will appoint their own rulers to lead the invasion.

Could there be other reasons for the invasion? A possible reason is that no babies will be born close to the end of the millennium. As we all know, in general, the desire to have children runs very deep. This will upset a lot of people, especially those who have just got married at the end of the millennium. Those in the kingdom who study their Bibles will know that there must come a point close to the end of the millennium when no more children will be born.

When we think about the implications, this really has to be the case. If children were born right up to the time of the second resurrection and judgment, there would not be enough time for the development of character. Someone cannot be born of the spirit (be immortalised) without first being born of water, which requires an adequate belief and understanding of the truth. One solution would be for all children born just before the end of the kingdom to live beyond the millennium until they reached a responsible age. However, they would have to undergo a judgement, as all others did before in the first or second judgements, but we don't read about a third judgement.

It would of course be possible that the post millennial children would themselves have children, which could continue *ad infinitum*. The only way of preventing this from occurring is to prevent people from having children. The line has to be drawn somewhere.

Hypothetically, if there were to be a third judgement, the possibility of death would have to exist as a punishment for the rejected, but we are told in Revelation 21:4 that there will be no more death. Another possibility is that all children who had not reached the age of responsibility at the time of the second judgement would die. However, we can dismiss this option, as this is not in accordance with God's character. It seems that the only conclusion that we can come to is that children will not be born in the kingdom beyond a certain date – maybe a century before the end of the millennium, in accordance with Isaiah 65:20.

It is possible that the onset of infertility coincides with the saints withdrawing to Jerusalem. If this is the case it may be that the invasion of Jerusalem will be an attempt to use military force to get the infertility reversed. Maybe an ultimatum will be issued – reverse the infertility or we attack Jerusalem! I think that it is also possible that prior to the invasion – if this is the reason for the invasion – there will be a resurgence of biomedical research to try and solve the global infertility problem, but won't be able to do it and so an element of the humankind decide on a military approach.

After the saints withdraw from Jerusalem some people's faith will begin to falter. Just how quickly this can happen can be seen in the incident when Moses went up Mount Sinai to receive the 10 commandments. After 40 days many of the people gave up on Moses and in their hearts and minds went back to Egypt. Reading between the lines, it is quite clear that with the withdrawal of the saints to Jerusalem some people will stop reading their Bible resulting in a runaway affect in the collapse of faith.

Those who continue to read their Bibles during the rebellion will know exactly what is happening. It is certain that faithful men and women will try and dissuade people from joining the rebellion. It is quite possible that the rebellion will split families.

The rebellion goes ahead. Assault troops travel to Israel by ship. Maybe they disguise themselves as people going up to Jerusalem. Maybe there are women and children on the ships to make it look like a legitimate trip to Jerusalem to worship God in the temple. The army

arrives as Jerusalem but the rebels have no time to fight as fire comes down from heaven and they are destroyed.

This event is reminiscent of the parable of the tares in Matthew 13:24-30. The servants of a master discover a field of wheat contaminated with tares (weeds). The master instructs his servants to let the wheat and weeds finish growing and separate the wheat and weeds at harvest time. Matthew 13:30 “Let both grow together until the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.” It is quite clear that during the rebellion at the end of the millennium the rebels are the weeds and the faithful the wheat.

We are told that invading army is as numerous as the “sand of the sea”. This implies that a very large number of people will be involved – potentially millions. After the fiery destruction an extensive clean-up operation will be required to remove and bury the dead bodies – an action replay of the aftermath of Armageddon. There will be a lot of weapons to be destroyed as well.

The second resurrection and the death of death

After the clean-up operation of ‘Armageddon 2’ the saints will leave Jerusalem and travel all over the world to resurrect those who have died during the millennium and collect those alive. As in the first resurrection, the mortals will have accounts of their lives written in a book. Who will have written these books? The saints will have been writing in the book throughout the millennium (Hebrews 2:5). Those found worthy will receive eternal life and those who are not will die (Revelation 20:15,15). The last person to die will signify the death of death (1 Corinthians 15:26).

This will be a unique funeral since everyone present will be an immortal being. This will of course be a sad event as all funerals are. The last person to die will be someone who was rejected at the second judgement seat. On the other hand, this funeral will be like no other. It will be followed by the greatest celebration on the Earth since the creation. I find a certain amount of humour in the situation in that death itself goes into permanent oblivion! I’m really, really looking forward to being at this funeral.

The death of death is described in dramatic language – Revelation 20:14 “And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.” Of course this verse is highly symbolic since the death of death is an abstract concept. The above verse is a parallel account to 1 Corinthians 15:54-55 “So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that it written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” Maybe the death if death can be made by more concrete by thinking about the death of the funeral business – no more funeral parlors, graveyards, crematoriums – all gone forever!

Maybe there is an allusion to the lake of fire in the OT in Isaiah 64:1-2 “Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence. As when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make thy

name known to thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at thy presence.” God’s ultimate adversary or enemy is death (1 Corinthians 15:26).

The arrival of God on the earth

The funeral of death would seem an appropriate moment for God to return to the Earth. The arrival of God on the Earth will be an incredibly exciting event. The last time God actually walked on the Earth was when the angels gave Him a tour of the creation on the seventh day. However, ever since the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden it has not been possible for God to come back to the Earth. Why?

We might think that if God visited the Earth this solve a lot of problems. God could prove He was God with an appropriate demonstration of power. There would only be one religion. Atheism would cease to exist. (Although I have my doubts about that).

God cannot come down to Earth at the present time because he cannot look directly on sin and sinners. We read in Habakkuk 1:13 “Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity, wherefore lookest thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest they tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he”. This verse appears to be paradox in that the first part says that God cannot look on iniquity whereas the second part says that he does. What is going on?

Firstly, let us deal with the first part of the verse, which is the section where says that God cannot look directly on iniquity. We might think that this is a strange restriction. If God is God, surely he can look anywhere he wants. However, this is one of the things God will not do, alongside other things - such as lying (Numbers 23:19, Hebrews 6:18; Titus 1:2).

The second part of the verse says that God does look on sin and several verses say this. Consider the following sequence of verses. Genesis 6:5 “And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.” Psalm 11:4 “The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD’s throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.” Job 34:21 “For his eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.” 2 Chronicles 16:9 “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him...” Hebrews 4:13 “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.” These verses make it clear that God takes a keen interest in events on the Earth.

So, how do we resolve the apparent paradox that God simultaneously looks on sin and yet doesn’t look on sin? The answer is that God sees what is happening on this Earth through the eyes of his angels. An excellent example of this is when God sent three angels to tell Abraham and Sarah they were to have a son, and then to visit Sodom and Gomorrah to find out if the behaviour is as bad the report that has reached His ears in heaven: At the time Abraham doesn’t realise he is being visited by God since the angels look just like men. We read in Genesis 18:20-21 “And the LORD said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and

because their sin is very grievous; I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me; and if not I will know.”

In this verse we are told explicitly that God’s intention was to “see” what was going on. If God could see directly there would be no need for him to send angels. It is clear from the record that some information about Sodom and Gomorrah reached heaven, but God wanted to find out more. The expression “which is come unto me”, accords with God not looking directly on sin, but rather receiving reports.

Two of the three angels who visited Abraham and Sarah depart for Sodom and Gomorrah on a fact finding mission whilst the third stays with Abraham. Abraham is very worried that Lot and his family are going to be destroyed with Sodom and Gomorrah. Abraham need not have worried as effectively God told him that he would not destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if there was only one righteous person in the city. God removes the single righteous person, Lot, before the city is destroyed.

As the two angels enter Sodom and Gomorrah at nightfall they are immediately intercepted by Lot on the way in. Lot did not recognise these angels as angels since they looked like men as they did to Abraham. What was Lot doing at the gate of the city at eventide? He was most probably there because he was familiar with the behaviour of the city and wanted to make sure no one was left on the streets at night because he knew what would happen. This was probably a regular occurrence. As with all forms of unrighteous behaviour there is a progression, and Sodom and Gomorrah had become so bad that it wasn’t safe for males at night.

We get the impression that Lot is running a free bed and breakfast service for strangers who visit the city. This was the price he was willing to pay to prevent immoral acts being performed on strangers. There was no way Lot was going to let two men camp out in the street at night. The expression “pressed upon them greatly” (Genesis 19:3) makes this clear. Paradoxically, two women probably would have been safe out on the streets at night.

The Apostle Peter expands on Lot’s attitude to the behaviour in Sodom and Gomorrah in 2 Peter 2:7-8 “And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked: (For that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds).” Incidentally, when the King James Version of the Bible was translated in the years leading up to publication in 1611, *conversation* had a wider meaning than it does today and included way of life as well as speech.

The same night that the angels enter Sodom and Gomorrah the decision is made for it to be destroyed. Prior to the decision to destroy the city there must have been some communication between God and the angels for God to command the destruction of the city, albeit with the proviso that enough time be allowed time for Lot to persuade his family to leave. This proved to be a difficult task since in the morning Lot’s sons-in-law refuse to leave and Lot, his wife and daughters have to be dragged out by the angels. Lot’s wife really did not want to leave and could not resist looking back on the burning city and became a pillar of salt.

Related to the issue of God not looking directly on the Earth is that God cannot be seen by mortal people. Old Testament characters were familiar with the concept of God being invisible and often worried about having ‘accidentally’ seen God. For example, Gideon panicked after being visited by an angel he thought was God, Judges 6:22 “And when Gideon perceived that he was an angel of the LORD, Gideon said, Alas, O Lord GOD! For because I have seen an angel of the LORD face to face.” God said to Moses: “Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live.” (Exodus 33:20).

In John’s gospel we read “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.” (John 1:18). Timothy says “Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever Amen.” (1 Timothy 1:17) and, “Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” (1 Timothy 6:16).

Another reason for the invisibility of God is the prevention of idolatry. If God’s face could be seen statues of God would proliferate all over the world. No doubt in time there would be different ‘interpretations’ of God resulting in depictions that look nothing like God. At the human level we might think that this would make belief in God much easier since there would be something tangible that people could relate to. However, God does not work this way. He wants people to believe he is a real person even although they cannot see him. God wants people to have *faith* in him, Hebrews 11:6 “But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”

At the present time, there is a verbal as well as a visual barrier between God and man. God does not speak directly to people neither can he be spoken to directly. God only communicates through the Lord Jesus Christ, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.” (1 Timothy 2:5). In Old Testament times the angels were the mediators in lieu of Jesus.

Jacob’s ladder is very interesting. Ladder between Heaven and Earth. God at the top. Angels descending and ascending – possibility of Jacob going up the ladder and God coming down. Jacob calls the place Bethel – the house of God. In the future Heaven and Earth become a single house of God. God came half way down the ladder – “God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself” – we are baptised into Jesus so we go half way up to meet God. We will go up the ladder by ascending to divine nature – God will come down the ladder to meet us here on the Earth. The idea of meeting half way is seen in Isa 64. The prophet desires that God will rend the heavens – reminiscent of the curtain in the temple being ripped from the top to the bottom signifying a way through into the most holy place in the tabernacle.

In the dream that Jacob had asleep in the wilderness, ‘Jacob’s ladder’, the ladder was Jesus enabling the angels to descend and ascend from heaven. Jesus said the Nathanael: “Verily,

verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” (1 John 1:51). Today, the angels assist Jesus with the task of mediation.

The purpose of the Law of Moses was to teach Israel about the barrier that exists between God and man. In 1 Peter 3:18 we read “For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit”, another indirect reference to Jesus as a ladder.

The Law of Moses taught that the barrier between God and man was only temporary and that one day there would be a way through. At the centre of the tabernacle was the most holy place where the cherubim overarched the lid of the ark of the covenant and where a light shone between the wings of the cherubim, the shekinah glory, representing the presence of God.

Access to the most holy place was restricted in that only the High Priest was allowed to enter once a year – Hebrews 9:7-9 “But into the second [most holy place] went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors [sins] of the people: The Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.”

This annual ritual pointed forward to when Jesus would go into the most holy place and stay to keep the way open for others to follow. This is explained in Hebrews 6:19-20 “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.” This is a reference to the ripping of the veil of the temple the moment Jesus that died on the cross: Matthew 27:50-51 “Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom...”

The splitting of the veil of Herod’s temple represented Jesus passing through into the most holy place. The high priest entered the most holy place bearing the blood of the sin offering for the nation. In Jesus case he symbolically transported his own blood through the veil.

We are told in Hebrews that the Tabernacle was a model of God’s plan of salvation. In fact we are told that the tabernacle and the items within were a *shadow* of God’s plan of salvation, in the same way that a building bathed in sunlight casts a shadow. This is interesting as it tells us that God’s plan of salvation is actually more solid than the Tabernacle.

Jesus was a member of a different priestly order, called the *Melchizedek order* who transported his own blood into the most holy place – Hebrews 9:12 “Neither the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place...”

We can look at the inaccessibility of God at a number of different levels. We don’t know where heaven is. If it were in this universe it would not have to be very far from the Earth to be

completely inaccessible to humans. The universe is an immense place as we shall see a bit further on in this book. The fact that God created the universe indicates that heaven is outside of the universe, which makes heaven truly inaccessible. Heaven could be a place where there is no air to breathe and so mortal human beings could not survive.

However, even if it were possible to reach heaven, there is still a barrier between God and human beings, which is that God cannot look directly on sin or sinners. God is unchangeable and therefore for people to be able to see God they have to change. The change involves a change from mortality to immortality. Jesus underwent this change in that he died and rose again and so can now stand in the presence of God – Hebrews 9:24 “For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us

A key question of direct relevance to us seeing God is whether God has a distinctive form. We are told that God is a spirit. For example, in Genesis 1:2 we read that “the spirit of God moved on the face of the waters” and in John 4:24 we are told that “God is a spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and truth.” What exactly is a spirit? We tend to think of a spirit as being like a mist or vapour, or in colloquial terms a ghost. The answer is that we don’t know what the spirit of God is like, and probably couldn’t comprehend it if we did. The best we can say is that God is not made from substance that we can understand or even capable of understanding.

In spite of God being a spirit, he does have a form. We are told that Adam and Eve were made in the form of God: “And God said, Let us make man in our image after our likeness...” (Genesis 1:26). In 1 Corinthians 11:7 the Apostle Paul translates “image and likeness” as “image and glory of God”. Image refers to physical form, which means that Adam and Eve looked like God in having a face and arms and legs etc. “Likeness” in Genesis 1:26 is translated as “glory” in 1 Corinthians 11. Glory refers to character. In Exodus 33:18 Moses asked God to show him his glory and God’s response is to describe his character. From this we can infer that when Adam and Eve were created with the glory of God they were created with the mental capacity to develop characters like God. From what we know about the purpose of God, Adam and Eve were made to look like God in anticipation of a having personal relationship with God.

From a human point of view physical meetings are very important. Business people often emphasise the importance of meeting people face to face to build a relation. People are wary of doing millions of dollars’ worth of business with someone they have never seen before (or as we say in Australia – “wouldn’t know them from a bar of soap”). Meeting someone for the first time on Skype or some other videoconferencing method is not the same as meeting them face to face. Skype works well when you already know someone, but can never replace a physical meeting.

Another important aspect of human relationships is size. How big is God? Most people picture God as an older man with a beard (what we might call the ‘Michelangelo God’– Google this to see what I mean). The ancient Egyptians painted their Pharaohs taller than their subjects to

indicate their importance. In human affairs we talk about ‘small man syndrome’, in which some men compensate in various ways for small stature. If we either had to communicate with God down a microscope or look up to a form 300 feet high the interaction would be quite different from speaking with someone face to face who is the same size as us.

We might argue that if God is a spirit he cannot be seen and therefore can only communicate through the written and spoken word. However, there is abundant evidence that God does have a physical form and it is a human form. A better way of looking at this is that human beings were created in the form of God. There are many verses that tell us that God is a real person. Jesus tells us that in heaven the angels see God face to face in Matthew 18:10 “Take heed that you despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father that is in heaven.” The angels can stand in the direct presence of God because they are immortal (Luke 20:36) and therefore sinless (Romans 6:23).

In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus said (Matthew 5:8) “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” Jesus could not have meant people would see himself as a manifestation of the Father since they were looking at him right then. What would the people understand by Jesus words? Surely they would understand that at some point in the future they would be able to see God face-to-face if they were pure in heart. If this is the case then Jesus’ words are prophetic of Revelation 22:4 “And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads.”

Job also looked forward to meeting God – Job 19:25-27 “For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.” It is clear from these verses that Job expected to meet God face to face at some point in the future. Job acknowledges the fact that in his current mortal state he was not able to meet God, but would be able to do so after a change of nature.

The apostle John also speaks about meeting God – 1 John 3:1-3 “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.” In a similar fashion to Job, John talks about the need for a change of nature before a meeting with God can take place. We have to be like God to be able to meet with God, i.e. have the same immortal nature.

A change of nature from mortal to immortal will take place for the saints at the beginning of the kingdom. During the kingdom the vast majority of people will be mortal, which will preclude God from visiting the Earth, except for his presence in the form of a cloud above the temple, in the same way it was seen in the Shekinah glory between the wings of the cherubim above the ark of the covenant.

One of the few places where we have detail about the kingdom is in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he hath saith that all things are out under him, it is manifest that he is accepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall also the Son also himself be subject under him, that God may be all in all.”

Death is described as the last enemy to be stamped under foot. This is a clear and obvious reference to Genesis 3:15 “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” This is a prophecy of Jesus’ presentation of his own body as a sacrifice on the cross. However, we see from the verses in Corinthians that the death and resurrection was a partial fulfilment of Genesis 3:15. The complete fulfilment will happen at the end of the millennium.

After the funeral for death, Jesus will hand over the keys to the kingdom to his Father. It would seem appropriate that the handover should take place on the earth since the kingdom of God was in earth. This will be the first time since the creation that God has been able to come to the Earth. God will join in with the funeral celebrations.

After Jesus has given the kingdom back to his father, the final step in the sequence is that God becomes “all in all”. What does this mean? We gain some insight into this in John 17:20-22 where Jesus says: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they may all be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they may also be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one.” Does this mean that we will lose our personality when we become one with God? When Jesus spoke the words quoted above he was already one with God although he was a distinct person from God. The relationship between Jesus and God was a father-son relationship. Therefore they were one in the sense that a father and son can be one in their ideas and purpose.

This is often seen in the business world where fathers and sons own a business and work together. With human father and son relationships there will be disagreements and this was true of Jesus and God. Jesus really did not want to go through with the crucifixion, hardly surprising, but he did submit to crucifixion because it was his fathers will. When Jesus spoke the words “... father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done“ (Luke 22:42) he may have been thinking about the time when God intervened and provided a ram for Abraham to sacrifice in place of his son Isaac and was hoping that something similar could be done. This was not possible since the sacrifice of Jesus was the real thing and the ‘sacrifice’ of Isaac a type or cameo of the death and resurrection of Jesus.

It is clear that the angels are also one with God: Psalm 103:20 “Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.” An appropriate analogy might be when a representative of a government meets with another

government. For example, when a US secretary of state visits another country it is understood that they speak with the authority of the president of United States of America. On such missions, the US secretary of state is an ‘angel’ of the president of the United States of America. It is very clear from scripture, that when angels spoke to people they spoke with the authority of God.

An excellent example of the relationship that God aspires to have with each of us is the friendship between Moses and God: Exodus 33:11 “And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend.” However, despite this close relationship even Moses was not allowed to the face of God – Exodus 33:20-23 “And he [God] said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the LORD said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and I will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen.”

It is apparent from these verses that God highly valued his relationship with Moses and went as far as he could in allowing Moses to see him. Although Moses could only see the rear of God’s head and not his face, this would have been an incredible experience for Moses to actually see that God was a real person. Often when I’m walking behind someone I haven’t seen before I try and guess what their face looks like. If I do get to see their face as I walk passed them I check to see how well I’ve done. No doubt for the rest of his life Moses tried to imagine what God looked like. At the end of the millennium, Moses will finally get to meet God face to face. No doubt God is also looking forward to meeting Moses face to face for the first time.

Hopefully this is also true of us, that God looks forward to meeting us face to face for the first time. In preparation for meeting God face to face, it is essential that we get to know God now. When God meets us he will not be meeting strangers: John 17:3 “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.” If we say that we know someone on “a first name basis” it implies that we have communicated with them directly. Although we cannot speak directly with God, we can communicate with God through reading the Bible and prayer.

God can also ‘speak’ to us in non-verbal ways to direct our paths: Proverbs 3:6 “In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.” Although technically we are not yet on a first name basis with God, God does know our name, which we can infer from Jesus message to the believers in Sardis – Revelation 2:4-5 “The hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy. He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”

An interesting question is whether God was really on the mountain only a few meters away from Moses? At first sight it does look like God was actually there. However, there is a problem with this. In 1 Timothy 6:16: we read of God “...dwelling in the light which no man

can approach unto...” This would seem to preclude God himself being on the mountain, otherwise Moses would have been “approaching God.” On the other hand this angel could not have been a ‘regular’ angel since there would not have been a problem with Moses seeing the angel’s face.

A possible solution to this dilemma is that Moses saw an angel who looked exactly like God, like a holographic projection, except the angel was really there a few meters away from Moses. The next question is, do we have any idea of the identity of this special angel? The angel could have been the angel spoken of in Exodus 23:20-22 “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him. But if thou shalt indeed obey his voice, and do all that I speak: then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies...” This particular angel, often referred to as “the name bearing angel” clearly has a higher status than a ‘regular’ angel. When this angel spoke it was the same as God speaking.

Another name for the special angel is the “angel of God’s presence”, as mentioned in Isaiah 63:9 “In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them: in his love and his pity he redeemed them; and he bare them, and carried them all the days of old.”

In the next chapter from the account of Moses meeting with God, we have a fascinating section of scripture which gives us an insight into God’s relationship with us in the future: Exodus 24:9-11 “Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: And they saw the God [Elohim] of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand; also they saw God [Elohim] and did eat and drink.”

These verses seem out of place in the Exodus account. This whole section of scripture is all about the separation of man from God and the need for continual sacrifice to keep this realisation at the front of peoples’ minds. Here we have a quite different situation. Moses and the elders of Israel sit down to have a meal with God. What is going on? Note that these verses emphasise the out of the ordinary situation. Moses and the elders are clearly closer to God than normally allowed. On reflection, this event is teaching us that the ultimate purpose of the law was the removal of the barrier between God and man so people can actually sit down and have a meal with God. So, it is possible that the name bearing angel was present on this occasion, although not in the actual form of God.

Another key passage in the Bible that talks about the arrival of God on the Earth is Revelation 21:3-4 “And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things have passed away.” These verses leave us in no doubt that the ultimate purpose of God is

to make the Earth part of heaven. The wiping away of tears speaks of an intimate relationship. Someone needs to get close to someone else to wipe away tears and so God will need to physically get close to people to wipe away tears.

The prophet Isaiah looked forward to the arrival of God on Earth. Isaiah 64:1 “Oh that thou wouldest rend the heavens, that thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence,” Details of the meeting are found a few verses on in Isaiah 64:4-5 “For since the beginning of the world men have not heard, nor perceived by the ear, neither hath the eye seen, O God, beside thee, what he hath prepared for him that waiteth for him. Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness, those that remember thee in thy ways...”

Once again these verses suggest a real, face-to-face meeting between us and God. David spoke of his yearning to meet God in Psalm 101. In this Psalm David realises the necessity for purity. For example, Psalm 101:2 “I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way, O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.”

Imagine being at the end of the kingdom at the moment when God arrives on the Earth. Only immortal men and women are now on the Earth. Imagine the intense excitement in the crowd assembled in the temple. Maybe the first sign will be a brilliant light on the eastern horizon, brighter than the Sun. The light gets closer and closer and descends on the altar in the centre of the inner court. This altar is now obsolete as there will be no need for sacrifices ever again. God’s feet come to rest on top of the altar. The first to meet God will of course be Jesus himself in order to hand over the Kingdom. I think that when we see God and Jesus side by side for the first time at the end of the kingdom it will be obvious that Jesus is God’s son in the same way that human fathers and sons often look alike and even sound alike.

After this God will meet everyone in person, which could take a long time, but in the immortal state time does not have the same urgency as it does today. This will be the first time that God has seen us directly and also the first time that God has seen Jerusalem, which of course did not exist in the Garden of Eden. No doubt God himself is looking forward to coming back to the Earth in person.

Most of us know from experience that no amount of photos, videos or Google Earth views can compensate for actually visiting a place. In February 2013 I visited Bhutan for the first time for work. I had done a lot of research beforehand looking at photos, videos and Google Earth. I remarked to a colleague that in comparison to actually being there “Google Earth really doesn’t cut it”. It will be exciting for God himself to be back on the Earth and not see what is going on through the eyes of his angels.

The most information that we have about the time after the millennium is found in Revelation 21:1-8. Our first reaction might be how can we be sure that this section of scripture refers to the period beyond the millennium rather than in the millennium? There are a number of indications that these verses are post-millennial. The first clue is in Revelation 21:1 “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and

there was no more sea.” The sea is a symbol of the nations. During the kingdom, nations will still exist. For example, we read in Psalm 72:11 “Yea, all kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him.”

In Zechariah 14:16 we read of those left of the nations coming up to Jerusalem – and in Daniel 7:12 “As concerning the rest of the beasts, they had their dominion taken away: yet their lives were prolonged for a season and a time.” If we take a time to be two Jewish times of 360 days and a season to be 280 days (roughly the human gestation period) we arrive at $360 + 360 + 280 = 1,000$ days or years in prophetic time.

We might think that nations will only exist at the beginning of the kingdom but after a while will be subsumed into the greater nation of the kingdom of God on Earth. However, it is clear from Revelation 20:8 that nations will exist at the end of the kingdom when the rebellion takes place, as seen earlier.

Beyond the millennium

What will happen beyond the end of the millennium? We are given a fair amount of detail of the postmillennial period in Revelation 21:1-8, which naturally follows on from Revelation 20. (From Revelation 20:9 onwards we are back to the beginning of the kingdom). Beyond the millennium there will be no more nations (v1), God will no longer be invisible (v3), no more death or sorrow (v4), all those faithful at the second judgement will become sons and daughters of God (v7), but all those not found worthy will die in the lake of fire (v8).

The unimaginable scale of the universe

Another question is will we be confined to the Earth? After all we read in Psalm 115:16 “The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD’s: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.” However, does this verse really apply to the case when God shall be all in all? The angels are obviously not confined to their original place as many have visited earth.

It is interesting to consider the size of the earth in relation to the size of the visible universe. The diameter of the *visible* universe (i.e. the farthest limit that can be seen with a telescope) is about 90 billion light years. The size of the earth compared to the size of the visible universe is about the same as an atom compared to the earth! Is it reasonable to suppose that the sons and daughters of God should be confined to such a tiny space?

The universe contains an unimaginable number of stars – it may come as a surprise (or shock) to you that the number of stars in the observable universe is comparable to the number of grains of sand on all the worlds beaches! This gives new meaning to God’s promises to Abraham that his seed would be as uncountable as the stars of heaven and the sand upon the sea shore!

We don’t know what God has in store for us at the end of the millennium. Probably we would be incapable of comprehending it in our current mortal state. One thing that we could speculate on is that as the sons and daughters of God, it is possible that we will be involved in other creations of some kind or other (Revelation 4:11).

Personally I think that there's a lesson in the fact that it is not possible to know how large the universe is. If the universe had a clearly defined limit then in principle it would be possible to explore all within its bound within a finite time. But since there is no known limit the possibilities are endless.

What will it be like to live for ever?

We might find the prospect of "living for ever" rather daunting. Surely we will run out of things to do. Will we get bored to death – except we can't die! However, we need to bear in mind that we will not in fact live forever. We cannot do that. It doesn't matter how long we live – a million years, a billion years, a trillion years – eternity will always lie before us. All that can be said is that we will live for a very long time. From a mathematical point of view the biggest number we can ever imagine is effectively nothing in comparison to infinity. So another way of thinking about living for ever is that time stands still. We are forever at the moment where infinity stretches out before us. This timeless aspect of existence will be reinforced by our unchanging physical appearance.

Although we talk about living for ever, we can never actually get there. We can't live for ever since no matter how long we live there will always be more time. If there's more time then we can't be at eternity. If we right down the biggest number of years imaginable – maybe even a number that is so large that the entire visible universe is filled with zeros – this is still only the beginning of eternity!

Friendships can last for ever. Can you ever imagine telling one of your best friends that you've been best friends for long enough and that since you've run out of things to talk about its time to call it quits? There will always be something to talk about throughout eternity. I sometimes try to think about living for ever in terms of a never ending journey. We will always be alive – we never ever have to worry about death. We won't have to ever worry about prolonged absences from each other – after all we've got eternity to catch up! Even if hypothetically we haven't seen someone face to face for a million years we know that they are still there and always will be.

It is quite possible that we will be involved in creative work elsewhere in the universe, although of course the earth will be our home. God is always creating as we read on Revelation 4:11 "thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

It is possible that when God told Abraham that he would make his offspring as numerous as the sand on the beach and the stars of heaven, he had beyond the millennium in mind. We now know that the universe is so huge that it could easily contain more people than all the grains of sand on Earth.

There are other aspects of living for ever. We will not have the same time pressures. If we haven't seen a friend for a long period of time this is not going to matter much since we've got

forever to catch up. Being immortal means the end of fear. Since there is no one in the universe, or any other universes, greater than God and we're immortal we can never ever be in danger of losing our lives.

What is the purpose of the creation? We are greatly privileged to be created with God-like attributes – for example creativity. Human beings collectively are highly creative – this comes from God. The universe is young therefore it would hardly be surprising if we will be involved in creating beyond the millennium.

Many of us have long term friends. In some cases our friendship started way back at school. True friends never get tired of each other. They may need a rest from each other sometimes, but the friendship will resume. Time deepens relationships. Therefore it doesn't make sense for two immortal friends to 'split' after a million years because they've had enough of each other! The common term BFF – "Best Friends Forever" will actually come true!

In principle, it would not matter if friends had a million year break since they will be eternity to catch up. The angels are destined to obtain new friends at the beginning of the kingdom and at the end – not actually in the kingdom since the angels will be on their well-earned break from looking after the Earth. Another aspect of eternal friendship to look forward to is the lack of conflict. In this case I mean verbal conflict. In the immortal state it is unthinkable that two people should have an argument that results in them not speaking to each other for a million years. The angels may have disagreements since they are individuals, but they are never nasty to each other or lose their temper.

14. A personal vision of the kingdom

Let's go into the future for a few moments and try and imagine what it will be like to live in the kingdom. From time to time personal visions of the kingdom are written. Probably the most notable is Robert Roberts' *The Final Consolation*. This chapter is my personal vision of the kingdom and therefore you may well disagree with some things. The purpose of this exercise is to try and make our vision of the future more real. Although we cannot know for sure what it will be like in the kingdom, we can gain some idea from the wealth of information presented in scripture.

The fact that God has said that the kingdom will exist means that effectively it already exists out there in the future. All references in scripture about the kingdom are part of the whole picture. Each passage of scripture about the kingdom from Genesis to Revelation is like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle. The vision of the kingdom presented here is my personal assembly of the jigsaw puzzle. In my mind this is how the pieces fit together. No doubt you have your own personal vision that probably differs from mine in some or many respects. Again speaking from

a personal point of view, having put together this vision, the kingdom does seem more real to me.

Although the account below is fictional I have tried to make it plausible. In other words all the events described *could* actually happen. For example, in one section I mention that occasionally Jesus teaches woodwork in a local school in Jerusalem. I don't think that this is beyond the bounds of possibility. In the gospel records, we learn that Jesus was a carpenter he was fond of children, he mixed with the lowly. We might argue that as ruler of the entire world surely Jesus would not have time for teaching children, even occasionally. However, we need to bear in mind that unlike today's leaders Jesus will be immortal and so will have a vastly greater capacity as a leader. Also, Jesus will be assisted by thousands, if not millions, of saints from throughout the ages who will be 'assistant' king-priests (Revelation 5:10). Once it gets going, the kingdom will be fairly smooth running without the continuous crises management that goes on today.

A visit to the kingdom

Let's imagine we are in the middle of the kingdom about 500 years or so after the return of Jesus. We step from the end of 20th century to the beginning of the 22nd century BC. We find ourselves hovering several tens of meters above the great altar which caps the mountain in the centre of the temple. Above our heads a gigantic cloud arches over the mountain. Some of our fellow immortal priests (sons of Zadok) have just finished transporting sacrifices up onto the huge metal plate of the altar called "The Lion of God".

Far below in the outer court thousands of expectant, nervous eyes look up at the altar. Many of them are praying. Will the sacrifice be accepted or rejected? Suddenly a column of fire shoots down from the cloud above that engulfs the sacrifices in flame. The water welling up through the centre of the mountain stops the altar plate melting in the intense heat. A shout of relief rises up from the faces below. The sacrifice has been accepted!

We will now go on a tour of Israel to see what's going on. We start to fly northwards over the golden city of Jerusalem, which covers the northern slopes of mount Zion. We feel the wind in our hair. We pass over majestic buildings surrounding verdant squares. For the moment we'll head north up to Zebulun Haven, the great northern harbour which receives ships from the Americas and Atlantic islands.

We are now flying fly across the plain north of Jerusalem, the north side of the Great Valley rises up 10 km ahead of us. The plain is packed with farms, which supply food to Jerusalem. After a few minutes we fly over the northern edge of the valley. It is incredible to think that the rocks that we are looking down on used to be the northern half of the Mount of Olives! The other half of the mountain lies several km south of Jerusalem.

We curve slightly to our right until we come to the Jordan valley. The River Jordan now flows in the reverse direction between Eneglaim and the Vale of Jezreel. Let's stop for the moment and have a look around. The sky is a deep blue expanse above our head. At this height we can see hundreds of km in all directions, in fact the air is now much clearer than it ever was in pre-

millennial days. In the distance to the south, a few km upstream from Eneglaim, we see two stone pillars on either side of the Jordan. This is known as the *Isaiah line*. Ships are not allowed beyond this line, and so cannot get close to Jerusalem.

We travel northwards following the Jordan, we eventually arrive at the Vale of Jezreel which now has a river flowing through its centre. The whole valley is now super fertile with all the water from the river. The higher and drier slopes of the valley (the sides of Mount Tabor, for example) are covered in vineyards. We descend slightly to get a closer look. Reapers are busy reaping corn. At the corner of the field we note a group of ploughmen and sowers who are good-naturedly berating the reapers for being too slow! As soon as the reapers have finished they will be at work ploughing and sowing a new crop.

We follow the new branch of the Jordan until we arrive at Zebulun Haven. Zebulun Haven is a truly massive harbour filled with hundreds of ships. Some are being repaired in a line of dry docks. Provisions are being loaded onto others. One ship is just about to berth at a dock. Children are crammed around the gate ready to jump off as soon as the gangplank is in place. A dockhand bellows out for them to stand back. We can tell from his tone of voice that he is used to this!

On the top of Mount Carmel bordering the south of Zebulun Haven is a huge lighthouse to guide ships into the harbour. This shines day and night since ships arrive and leave around the clock. With sailing ships it is not possible to predict and plan a precise time of arrival. A line of buoys divides the channel at the entrance to the harbour in two. With so many ships arriving and departing 24 hours a day it is essential to have good lane discipline. Looking out from the harbour, ships go out on the left-hand side and in on the right. Columns of ships stretch out into the Great Sea. We focus on one of the ships, from its flag we can tell that it is on its way to America, the one behind it is going to South America.

Several large warehouses border areas of the harbour. These contain goods transported from all over the world. The actual trading goes on in Jerusalem, but in many cases the exchange of goods goes on here. Some goods have arrived from South America and have been exchanged for Norwegian goods. In this case the goods have been simply swapped from one ship to the other.

To the northeast of Zebulun Haven we can just about make out the Sea of Galilee on the horizon, remarkably unchanged from the time of Jesus 2,000 years ago. The Jordan flows out of the Sea of Galilee and joins up with the northern flowing Jordan. Fishermen are out on the Sea of Galilee, pretty much as they always have done over the millennia. Beyond Galilee the snow-capped slopes of Mount Hermon rise up majestically from the haze. To the north we can also see Tyre projecting into the Great Sea, famous for its purple clothing after Lydia resurrected then ancient art of producing Tyrian purple dye using secretions from the Murex shellfish.

There are two main routes from Zebulun to Jerusalem on either side of the central Hill Country of Israel. One road passes down through the Shephelah and the other tracks down the Jordan valley. Several horse and carts are moving up and down.

The sun sets below the Western horizon and we decide to go back to Jerusalem, but we won't go back the way that we came, we'll go via the Shaphela. We fly over the top of Carmel, which separates the Shaphela from Zebulun Haven. The Shaphela is now a vast area of well-watered meadows. Cattle graze the fields. These supply milk and meat to Jerusalem.

The *Assyrian- Egyptian* (AE) highway that connects Africa and Asia via Israel runs down the coastal plane. We can see the highway off to our right fairly close to the coast. The road disappears in the haze as it goes down towards Gaza. Lights are moving up and down the road. The road suddenly curves to the left and goes up through the hills to Jerusalem. We can see travellers moving along the road, some have come all the way from China via the re-opened Silk Road and AE highway.

We fly above the road and soon we are passing over the outer suburbs of Jerusalem. The houses are made of golden Jerusalem sandstone. They are low set with flat roofs. People are up on their roofs talking. Each house is surrounded by an ornate garden with perfect lawns. No rubbish is to be seen anywhere. The streets of Jerusalem are not what they used to be!

As we enter Israel from the east we fly over the top of the Live Sea heading for Jerusalem. We can see many fishing boats busy catching fish to supply the many restaurants in Yahweh Shamar, Jerusalem and the temple. Fishermen are repairing their nets on the western shore of the Live Sea – they are catching so many fish the nets have to be repaired regularly. Down to our left we see the Valley of Achor, we focus on a line of cows coming in for milking in one of the hundreds of dairies producing milk, cheese, butter and yogurt for Jerusalem and surrounding cities.

To the north west of Jerusalem beyond Bethel we see Timnath famous for its honey. As well as supplying Israel, some of the honey is sold in the Jerusalem markets, since honey has aseptic properties it can be transported to all corners of the globe without deteriorating. Timnath also has a major industry in manufacturing candles from the vast quantities of bees wax, also sold in Jerusalem and bought by visitors and lights homes literally all over the world.

Let's now visit the Jerusalem shops – a maze of alleys of shops made of Jerusalem stone is some ways similar to the old quarter of Jerusalem before the 'Great Destruction' five hundred years ago. One difference though is that the shops are not quite as cramped as they were in the former days, there are several small squares surrounding tinkling fountains amongst the shops. There are shops selling spices, fabrics, books, clothes, art equipment, easels and paints etc.

Jerusalem contains the best musicians and singers in the world involved in worship in Jerusalem. The top instrument makers are also to be found in Israel. A lot of musical instruments are purchased in Israel and transported back to far-flung corners of the globe.

We walk into a square and walk over to inspect the fountain in the centre. The centrepiece of the fountain is a large stone fish with open mouth ejecting a stream of water. We look more closely and notice the small figure of a man suspended in the stream as if just been ejected from the mouth. This is clearly a depiction of Jonah being ejected from the mouth of the great fish that had been his home for three days and nights.

We enter one of the shops, it is a clothes shop and therefore is filled with mostly women although there are some men who look like they would rather be elsewhere. Two female assistants are looking on as man and a women who look like they are in their thirties rummage through the silk scarves. The man has short dark hair wearing a white robe and the woman long blonde hair that has a distinctive bounce. She is wearing a bright dress similar to an Indian sari. The man shows her a colourful scarf of a snake in an apple tree, clearly a depiction of the serpent in the Garden of Eden. The woman looks at the scarf and throws her head backwards and roars with laughter and says "I don't think so". The man laughs as well as they both walk out of the shop. We overhear the conversation of the two assistants. "Do you know who they were?" "No" "Adam and Eve!" "Wow!"

We move on into the centre of the hotel section of the city. It is structured around squares. Numerous ornate lights illuminate each square. The grass in the centre is packed with children playing. Their parents are busy talking to friends in cafes and restaurants which line the edges of the square. The children are so noisy that it is a wonder that anyone can make themselves heard on the sidewalks! We notice that in the main the parents don't have to worry about their children. However sometimes children run across the road to their parents for them to resolve some kind of dispute. There is one big difference between the new and old Jerusalem - there are no cars. Children can play quite safely in the streets of Jerusalem.

As we look at the people in the square we notice another major difference between the kingdom and the world before. Hardly any grey hair is in evidence. Some of the men have bald heads but no one looks more than about 50 years old. Since we are 500 years into the kingdom, no one born in the kingdom is old enough to be old in the pre kingdom sense.

As we look closer we notice other big differences. Bibles are out on several of the cafe tables as people discuss scripture. Every now and again a table goes quite as someone gives thanks. In one restaurant, we notice a group of young people are about to have a meal together, the table goes quite as the waiter gives thanks for the whole table. Another thing that we notice is that there appears to be a lot of international romance going on! This of course is no surprise as millions of young people come to Jerusalem each year. Today, there are no language barriers between races. Many of these young people get married which results in families being spread out across the world. Many family reunions take place in Jerusalem.

There is an international market in Jerusalem. Traders are milling around looking at each other's wares. We stop at one of the stalls where Sabeian spices (including myrrh and frankincense) fill the air with wonderful scents. These have been transported by camel train

from the bottom of Arabia. An Indian trader has brought spices via the Silk route and AE highway.

Walking through the squares of Jerusalem we notice a large building fronted with Corinthian style pillars – the Jerusalem Art Gallery. We ascend the steps and enter the entrance hall, down a wide corridor to the left we see a crowd of children pushing and shoving their way into one of the galleries. There's obviously something of great interest here! As we get closer we hear screams coming from the room. A little voice cries out help! What's going on? We arrive opposite the door and peer in. A huge monster is about to leap from the canvas – it's got brass claws and iron teeth – it's Daniel's 4th beast - exactly as he saw it in vision described in Dan 7.

There is another building next to the art gallery, this is the famous Jewish library. The entrance hall has large marble pillars around the edges. In spite of this, the entrance hall has a warm feeling about it due to large tapestries hanging on the walls, and even some from the ceiling. We go through an arch into a huge atrium with a fountain in the middle completely enclosed in a crystal sphere to prevent water getting out and books getting in.

We look up to the ceiling and our breath is taken away. The atrium is covered in a huge glass dome. In the very centre of the glass is a picture of the world. Somehow the colours have been embedded in the glass. However unlike the stain glass windows of the previous world, there do not appear to be any joins in the glass. No national boundaries can be seen – this is the world as seen from space. Clouds are seen swirling over the oceans. Jerusalem is positioned at the very apex of the dome. This is the world as God sees it. A verse from the prophet Isaiah suddenly springs to mind as we look up at the majestic site: "It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain. And spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in".

The atrium has numerous couches and armchairs scattered around the central fountain. Rugs are positioned at various locations on the smooth stone floor. Some of the rugs have young children playing on them. We hear the laughter of teenagers coming through one of the many archways leading out of the atrium. We go through to investigate. We enter a room much smaller than the main atrium, but still as large as most town libraries. A sign is painted onto the archway: "The past world".

A group of about five teenagers are gathered around a book. We listen in to the conversation. A boy calls out:

"Hey come over here and look at this!"

"What is it?"

"What are all those lights? They look like metal chariots with rubber wheels. There are hundreds of them! They seem to be stuck."

"Yes, it says here that in the last century before the kingdom, people used to spend hours and hours travelling around in small metal chariots on wide roads. They were called cars. There were so many of them that often they would not move for hours. Look at this! It says that some people never actually got to work – they were stuck in traffic all day!"

“How could people live like this!”

“How did the chariots move? I can’t see any horses? “

“They had fires inside that burned oil dug out of the earth – according to this book they called it gas”.

The children all looked at each other and roar with laughter.

“See this long line of chariots ... cars coming off the road here? Yes. They’re going to get more gas”.

The children turn over a page.

“Brown sky? Yuk! It says here that this was produced by the smoke coming out of the chariots – called exhaust fumes. There were so many cars that all the smoke hung over the city.”

“What’s the name of the city? Los Angeles - America.”

“What are those thin square mountains sticking up into the brown sky?

“It says here that they were called Sky scrapers? “

“It must have been pretty scary living in one of those. “

“it says here that in city centres people used to work in Sky Scraper!”

“Huh? Weird!”

We decide to speak to the children. The children jump because they didn’t notice us come in – which they didn’t since we were invisible. A conversation strikes up as the children ask us what it was like to live before the kingdom. They really do struggle coming to terms with it. They ask us how we found it possible to live in such a world.

The teenagers turn over a page. It shows a picture of very young children playing with plastic toys being supervised by a number of young women.

“I know what this is! It’s an orphanage.”

“No, it’s a child-care centre”

“A what?”

“A child-care centre. In these times most mothers went to work. They dropped their children off in the morning and picked them up at night. Some children spent a long time there.”

“Do you mean it was some kind of school? Some of these children look far too young to go to school.”

“All of these children are preschool – some went when they were just six weeks old and went to the child-care centre every day until they went to school when they were five years old.”

“The poor things – so some of these children never experienced a normal home life.”

“No, they didn’t”

“Why did their mothers have to work? Was everyone so poor that mothers had to work as well as fathers?”

“No, in the Western world just before the return of Jesus, people were very well off. In fact there was never a time before when people were so well off.”

“So why on earth did mothers have to work?”

“Well to be fair, some did have to work – because they had no husbands or because their husbands had no work or did not earn enough money. Women worked for many reasons. Some woman had a career. Some thought they would be bored at home.”

“Isn’t being a mother one of the most important jobs in the world?”

“We know that now – but not many thought that then in the Developing World.”

Another page is turned. The children gasp in horror at what they see. They turn to look at us for an explanation.

“It was a mass shooting”

“But these are little children!”

One of the girls starts to cry. “How did that happen?”

We explain about gun ownership in America in the last days. We have to describe a gun and bullets as the children have never seen a picture before.

“Before the return of Jesus there were 350 million guns in America. A young man went on the rampage with one of these weapons – a semi-automatic weapons – and killed these little children.”

“At least after this occurred all the guns must have been taken away!”

There’s a few seconds of silence, and then one of us replies.

“Actually, no”

“No?”

“Gun sales actually increased after this as many people felt even more unsafe”

“But, surely it would make sense to stop selling guns and collect all the guns so this couldn’t happen again!”

“Yes, you would think that. One of the last presidents of America, Barak Obama did try to reduce the number of massacres by making it harder for people to get guns – but a lot of people didn’t agree with him”

There’s a long silence as the children stare at us. One of us speaks.

“It was a mad world then and it wasn’t until the return of Jesus that the ultimate gun control occurred –all weapons were collected. In fact, all 350 million guns in America were collected – in some cases forcibly. If you turn over a few pages you’ll see the American Weapon Mountain.”

The children do so. There are appreciative gasps when they see the size of the mountain.

One of the girls speaks out.

“Enough of the past! Let’s getout into the real world again.”

The teenagers say good bye to us and walk out into the sunlit street outside the Jerusalem library.

Let’s now move on and have a look at the government buildings. We glance at Mt. Zion a few kilometres away. The cloud over the temple is now glowing providing light for some of the city. The government buildings are truly magnificent. The buildings are no more than three stories high and are structured around squares. We arrive at one of the squares; there is a fountain in the middle. The falling jets of water sparkle in the light from street lamps. We are now at the very hub of the worldwide government. A group of saints wave to us as we pass, we wave back.

The work of government never ceases, going on through the day and night. Saints never get tired! We enter one of the council chambers. A group of saints sit around a table discussing a far off country that is refusing to come up to Jerusalem. A delegation of saints has been sent to help the saints that oversee that country, but to no avail. At this very moment, a group of saints are stationed high above a point in the Pacific waiting for the command to alter atmospheric conditions to stop the rainfall on the country. In fact they will set in place cherubims which will adjust the local climate. In some ways the cherubims are similar to the one that guarded the entrance to the garden of Eden when Adam and Eve were sent out.

We walk through one of the gardens and enter a large campus – very much like a university campus. This is Jerusalem College. The world comes here to learn of God's ways in more detail than in their home countries. The instruction goes on day and night. We walk into one of the lecture theatres, that is packed with hundreds of people many of whom are busy taking notes. A saint is talking about Christ in the Old Testament. As we walk out of the building we pass four saints –Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

We travel back to the temple and enter the great eastern dining hall to have a meal. We don't need to eat, but we do. We enter the hall and sit down at one of the tables. The scene would look very strange by pre-millennial standards. No one looks old. Everyone looks as if they're in their twenties, and yet their behaviour and deportment is that of people that are far older.

It is mid-summer and there is a breeze blowing in through giant windows looking eastwards. Beneath the window we see the blue ribbon of the River of Life flowing down to Egel. We enter the hall with eager anticipation. The hall is full of saints of all sizes and colours – African saints with brilliantly coloured robes, others with more conservative white robes.

We sit with a group of saints from the Huguenot period. We discuss what it was like to live through this dreadful period of persecution. When we talk with each other we are able to transfer the images that we see in our minds eye. In this case as we talk we are suddenly transported back to the Huguenot period. We are running through the streets of Paris at night being chased by soldiers. We hear our rasping breath, the sound of our boots pounding on the cobbled stones. The street lamps cast flickering shadows on the narrow streets. This is not virtual reality, it is reality! It is exactly like being back in the past.

The seating arrangements in the dining hall are interesting. Sometimes we sit next to people we 'don't know'. This way we will get to know each other by the end of the millennium. If we don't then it doesn't matter since as we have eternity ahead of us. At other times we sit together as ecclesial groups (a kind of ecclesial reunion). Sometimes we sit down as family groups, which in some cases span several centuries. At one time we had a *genealogy dinner* as in Luke chapter three. Adam and Eve were seated at one end of the great table, followed by Seth, Enos etc right down to Jesus.

I have my usual hot Indian curry. It tastes hot just like it did in the mortal state. Later on we strike up a conversation with a group of saints from Siberia, including Anna who is ruler of 10 Siberian cities. She discusses with us the various problems they have in this far-flung corner of the world. We are only a century into the millennium and we are still working on getting the world the way we want it. Anna invites us to Siberia. We say that we will take her up on her offer, but first we have another mission.

We notice three men walk into the dining hall several hundred meters away. With immortal super-senses we can see clearly who they are and hear their conversation. The men are Jesus, Moses and Elijah. Jesus is explaining to Moses and Elijah that he is running late since he has just been teaching woodwork at a local school and that after the dinner that everyone is arriving for he will be having coffee with Mary, Martha and Lazarus in the Jerusalem markets.

Jesus, Moses and Elijah. They sit down opposite Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who look about the same age. They have similar features and so look more like brothers than grandfather, father and son. David and Jonathan are also on the same table along with the twelve disciples who often sit next to Jesus just as they did 2,100 years ago.

After the meal is over, we give Anna a hug goodbye and we go our separate ways. Anna heads off back to the cold of Siberia. We walk out onto the balcony of the great hall and walk straight off the edge. For a moment we hover above the gigantic walls of the temple, we're about half way along and so they stretch off into the distance about 0.8 km on either side. At either end we see the great towers rising majestically at the corners.

We move off and the land falls away below. Soon we are flying above the River of Life following its course down to the Live Sea. A vast forest stretches either side of the River of Life. Closer in to the banks we can see knots of people gathered together. These people are attending the clinics of the *leaf doctors* who are specialists in the healing properties of the myriad varieties of trees that grow in the Forest of Life. With our keen vision we can see someone opening their mouth and sticking their tongue out, someone else's neck is being felt. Some things haven't changed!

A man who has had his hand cut off in an agricultural accident is receiving instructions from one of the physicians about exercising his new hand on the way back from Jerusalem so he can get back to cane farming in Queensland. We notice a man and woman – a husband and wife – who are sitting together on a stone seat near a fountain in a courtyard of a complex of low stone buildings. This looks like a hospital. A sign above the entrance shows it is called the Hadasah Hospital. The previous hospital on the Mount of Olives was destroyed in the Great Earthquake and this is the new hospital built within the *Forest of Medicines* beside the River of Life.

Every few moments the man and women look anxiously towards the pillared entrance. A fleck of sunlight reflects off the wings of a luminous blue dragon fly darting about the fountain. The door opens and they both jump. They both get to their feet, they are both trembling slightly. They are both staring at a teenage boy walking towards them in a blue robe. He says cheerfully,

“Hello mum and dad!” The woman clutches her husband and bursts into tears. They hug their son. Their son was severely mentally retarded, but has now been completely cured.

Time to move on. We rise above the forest. We notice that near the hospital there is a small town embedded in the forest –this is where most of the leaf doctors and their families live. We continue down the valley towards the Arabah. The descent is fairly steep. We arrive at Eneglaim, just above the entrance to the Live Sea. Eneglaim is a giant double waterfall - *the fountain of the two calves*. We feel the spray on our faces as we pass over. Half of the water flows to the north and half to the south. The Valley of Shittim lies beyond and further out we can see the blue line of the Mountains of Moab.

We travel southwards until we get to the entrance to the Live Sea. This is quite different from what it used to be. It is now teeming with fish. All the way from Eneglaim southwards to Engedi (about half way of the sea) is bordered by fishing villages. We notice a number of fishermen mending their nets on flat rocks along the shoreline. Just west of the Sea of Life we see the valley of Achor, which is full of cattle, which provides meat and milk to Jerusalem.

At the entrance to the Live Sea we descend so low that our feet skim the surface of the water. We see myriads of fish down in the depths. We race forward feeling spray on our faces, salt bergs appear ahead of us – we’re now at the southern end of the sea where the salinity is as it was before the ‘healing’. The Sea of Life is highly unusual in that it contains a vast variety of fresh and salt-water fish. The top end contains fresh water fish and the bottom end salt-water fish as in the Great Sea.

We continue down the Arabah south of the sea. This area is now forested. We notice a commotion down in the forest. What’s going on down there? Let’s have a look. Someone has been building an archway in a house – his own house, but something has gone wrong and the archway has collapsed. Fortunately no one has been hurt. A group of people, the man’s family and friends are looking on. The man’s best friend is laughing so hard he can’t get up off the ground. Another friend explains what has gone wrong. The keystone was too small. The friends rebuild the archway, which stays up this time. Onlookers cheer and clap. It looks like the house is finally ready to move into.

Let’s have a look in the house next doors. We pass by a fig tree and enter into a courtyard. The sides of the courtyard are completely covered with a vine with huge bunches of grapes. We walk into the main living area. The large numbers of books filling ornately carved wooden bookshelves strikes us. A lot of books lie scattered on the floor and on sofas and beanbags; obviously a lot of reading goes on here. A few wooden toys lie scattered around. Thankfully, the era of plastic electronic monsters has passed, never to return!

A large circular rug lies in the centre of the room; it must be at least 2 meters in diameter. The rug is embroidered with a map of the world, however the detail is so fine, and the colours so bright, that at first sight you wouldn’t think that it was embroidered. Jerusalem is at the centre

of the map. The main shipping lanes and caravan routes leading to Jerusalem have been drawn as dotted lines.

A group of children sitting on cushions on the floor show each other pictures of plants in their drawing books. The children of the kingdom are far more in tune with nature – they have an encyclopaedic knowledge of plants, birds and animals and delight in drawing them. Music emanates from an adjoining room where a group of adults and children are playing instruments – we recognize the sound of a harp and sackbut. They are preparing for a concert night. We hear one of the children say that it's going to be in Beer Sheba at the time of the next new moon – Abraham and Sarah are going to be there and so they had better be good!

We carry on southwards above the Arabah; eventually we pass over the road that runs from Jerusalem to Ezion Geber at the top of the Gulf of Aqaba. Ezion Geber is the major port in the south of Israel and is just as big as Zebulun Haven in the north. Here people arrive from the East Coast of Africa, South East Asia, Oceania and the South Pacific. We can see columns of ships out in the deep blue gulf beyond. In the distance we can just make out the caravan route that winds its way down the western side of Saudi Arabia to Sabea at the bottom. With our super-sense vision we can clearly see shoals of brightly coloured fish swimming amongst the coral reefs in the Red Sea.

We increase our altitude to several thousand meters and start flying southwest, passing over Sinai heading out to Egypt on our journey down into Africa. The Gulf of Suez has been filled to enable passage of the Egyptian-Assyrian highway connecting Africa and Asia via Israel.

The whole of the southern part of Israel is forested; the Negev is full of bubbling streams. We descend to take a closer look. There are several parks beside the Egyptian-Assyrian highway, which are full of people that are travelling to and from Jerusalem. A group of children wave up at us, we wave back.

As we travel south on our way to Africa we pass over the western edge of the Arabian Desert. We notice a group of travellers on the way to Jerusalem camping for the night at an oasis. Let's take a closer look. We descend and alight onto one of the massive dunes overlooking the oasis. The sight is incredibly beautiful. A huge crescent moon hangs above the western horizon. Venus shines brilliantly close to the moon. The planets, Jupiter and Saturn have just appeared along with Sirius, the brightest star in the sky, tinged with flashes of red, green and blue. Flickering oil lamps reflect off the still waters of a small pond surrounded by magnificent palm trees. A hawk curves through the twilight air in search of food. After the evening meal it is time for the readings. One of the readings chosen is Psalm 92. We hear a young child read the words: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree..."

Time to move on. We rise above the dunes and continue south. We are now well on our way down into central Africa. We pick up speed and feel the rush of the air through our hair. At this rate we will be where we want to go in just a few minutes. Africa lies below. The Africa of the 21st century has now been forgotten. Africa is now a place of vibrant colour and laughter.

We reach the Kenyan border. Time to descend. We have been invited to a village to see a play - *Daniel in the lion's den*. The sun has just set, lamps on posts flicker around the edge of an open-air theatre. Lots of people are gathered together, the ladies and girls are dressed in brilliantly coloured dresses. We wave to some African saints; we are delighted to see three well-known characters amongst them - the Queen of Sheba, Queen Candace and her treasurer (the eunuch).

Queen Candace is once again Queen of the Ethiopians, and the eunuch has his old job back of overseeing the financial matters of Ethiopia! They have just come over the border for the evening. We join the expectant audience. The people know that we are saints and so keep a respectful distance. Many of the children are staring at us as they know that we are different (we hear their parents saying 'Stop staring!').

It is now time for the play to begin, a hush comes over the audience. Suddenly brilliant flares high up on poles light the dark stage. We are transported back to ancient Babylon. We see Darius pacing back and forth in his palace. 'Daniel' is thrown into the lions den amongst real lions! One of the lions walks up to 'Daniel' and opens his mouth - a collective gasp erupts from the children. A little voice calls out "Mummy! Daniel is going to get eaten!" Her mother reassures her – "Don't worry Sojil, lions don't eat people ... anymore".

After the play is over there is supper around a massive campfire. A huge full moon rises up behind some trees. The lions lie down fairly close to the fire to soak up some warmth, several of the children go over to pat them and feed them some straw. We notice that a little girl has got a brightly coloured snake wrapped round her neck. The snake probably goes everywhere with her. She feeds it a bit of earth. It probably would have been highly poisonous in pre-millennial days. We end up staying late – talking – just like when we were young, except now we never get tired.

We have one more visit to make before our tour of the kingdom is over. We're going to see Anna in Siberia. It is now in the early hours of the morning in East Africa, it will just be getting light in Siberia, if we leave now we will have ample time to get there for our tour of a Siberian school. We rise up into the starry night. The campfire quickly recedes to a point. The resplendent landscape of Africa lit by the full moon forms a panoramic vista below us. With super-sense we can easily see and hear all the creatures going about their business at night. We rise higher and higher; we are now flying so high that the air is tenuous and the wind is a faint whistle in our ears. On the way up we pass through the ozone layer at a height of about 25 km. The ozone layer has just about recovered from the damage that it suffered during the 20th century.

At 300 km above the earth, we are now in space. We fly along in complete silence. Apart from the light of the moon now directly above our heads, and a few scattered points of light down below, the earth is fairly dark. Without huge cities and highways jammed with cars, the world is much darker (and cleaner) than it was in pre-millennial days.

If we wanted to, we could get to where we want to in a few seconds, but we'll take our time, as there are lots of fascinating things to look at on the way! Since we're more or less right above the equator, we'll fly along the equator to the East Indies and then we'll turn and head north to Siberia.

The East Coast of Africa passes far below; we are now heading out across the Indian Ocean. As we pass over the coast we see a string of lights a few tens of km out in the ocean. These are ships going to Jerusalem from the East coast of Africa. Far to the north we can make out two strings of lights moving across the Arabian Sea. The lines converge at the entrance to Gulf of Aden. These are ships going to and from Jerusalem. The ships pass from view as we move deeper into the Indian Ocean.

Above our heads billions of points of light form a brilliant band across the sky – the Milky Way. Further out, at unimaginable distances, we can see an uncountable multitude of galaxies of all shapes, sizes and colours. Each galaxy contains on average 100 billion suns! The heavens truly declare the glory of God! When our job is done here, we'll be able to visit all these places. We feel a tremendous thrill of excitement as we contemplate the wonderful, never-ending adventure ahead of us.

A large island appears on the horizon just left of centre. This must be Sri Lanka. As we pass by we can make out the tea plantations hugging the hills. We notice a small stone house right on top of a cone shaped mountain, reached by a tortuous path winding up the side. A robed figure is up on the flat roof of the house looking through a telescope. With much less artificial light and air pollution, unprecedented views of the heavens are now attainable from the earth. We notice that the man is holding a small boy in his arms who is three or four years old. The man is now pointing up at the sky and explaining something. This is a novel way of getting a child off to sleep.

The eastern horizon begins to lighten. We race to meet the dawn. The light ahead brightens into an immense blue arc – the crescent earth. Suddenly a red and blue band appears across the horizon and rays of sunlight burst over the horizon. We turn left and travel north. We pass over the steep and steamy jungles of Thailand filled with brilliantly coloured birds and then head across the mountains of central China.

Down on our right we can see the city of Xian, which was the beginning of the ancient silk route to Europe, now revitalised as the major road from the Far East to Jerusalem. We see people moving on the road far below. Next we pass over the arid wastes of the Gobi desert, then over the mysterious, deep dark waters of Lake Baykal, the largest inland body of fresh water.

The frozen white wastes of Siberia stretch out before us. As we descend the wind howls around us, we can feel that the air is -60 °C. It feels really cold but being immortal it is not

uncomfortable. We descend towards the city where Anna is based. As we approach we notice lots of children skating on a frozen lake.

We walk through the square to the main building. People stare at us. We are decidedly underdressed in our light robes, which are whipped by the wind. Anna comes out to meet us. She looks at our bear feet and laughs mentioning that we do not have the right clothes for the occasion. Anna is dressed in a thick fur coat; she does not need to wear the coat for warmth, but likes to wear it in keeping with the local custom.

Anna takes up to visit a local school. A huge open fire burns on one side. The children are doing Bible study. The children are getting ready for a trip to Jerusalem. None of them has been before and they are getting very excited. Up on the wall are paintings of the temple being constructed several decades ago. An older man enters through the door – he has come to tell the children about his visit to Jerusalem 20 years ago. He described the buildings to the children who listen attentively. When he is finished several hands shoot into the air to ask questions.

We notice that one of the children, Dmitri, is clutching a letter, which he is excitedly showing to others. Dmitri sent a letter to Ezekiel who actually wrote back and offering to take Dmitri on a tour of the temple to explain how it was built. Anna explains to us that another 1,000 children have written to Ezekiel from her 10 cities and he has agreed to take them all!

It is now time to leave our vision of the kingdom and come back to the present – a present that gets shorter as we approach the reality of the kingdom!