

The Lion is the Lamb:  
A Study of the King of Kings,  
His Glorious Kingdom, and  
His Promised Return

By Andrew Roberts

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## **Author's Note**

This effort is for the glory of Jesus Christ, savior and king.

I thank my elders and brethren at the Jackson Heights church of Christ for their encouragement, support, and being kingdom-minded.

I thank my brother, Jonathan, for his collaboration and suggestions. I thank the Spiritbuilding team for their encouraging words as well as confidence in the material.

I thank my wife, Julie. Her wisdom, patience, strength, and talents are rich blessings to me and our daughters, Erin and Olivia.

I hope this Bible study will be an aid to those who are confused by the shifting programs and plans of so-called prophecy experts concerning the "End-Times." Dates as well as date-setters come and go but Scripture is true, Jesus is king, and the messianic kingdom of Old Testament prophecy is the New Testament church of Christ. Just approach the following pages with an open mind and an open Bible and you'll see that Calvary's lamb is the kingdom's lion. The Lion is the Lamb!

Andrew Roberts  
October 2008

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# Introduction

**Lesson 1**

**The Bible is Our Kingdom Guide**

*The Kingdom of Christ*

*The Second Coming*

*The End Times*

Few themes capture the imagination of believers and unbelievers alike. Yet the exploration of grand subjects such as the reign of Jesus or the world's end fuels interest, excitement, and anticipation. Surely the sensational speculation of today's "prophecy experts" causes some of the current End Times appetite. But who needs them? The pure Word of God on these matters is wonderful and simply amazing.

*The Lion is the Lamb* invites all to open their Bible and contemplate the King of kings—the creator and redeemer, the savior and judge. Jesus Christ is glorious! And all who believe that Jesus is the Christ desire a place in His kingdom. This study touches on issues that stretch from eternity to eternity, and the Bible is our guide for it all.

The fact is, while "Christendom" is mostly united in the conviction that Jesus is the Christ, there is great controversy among adherents about His kingdom. Is the kingdom spiritual, encompassing aspects of heaven and earth? Or is the kingdom strictly physical, pertaining solely to earth? Has the kingdom been established? Are Christians citizens of it today? Or, as others say, is the kingdom yet to be established? If the kingdom is yet to be established, shall it only come gradually by the proclamation of the gospel over the world? Or must Christ's kingdom come about suddenly after the world is shocked by "the Tribulation" and a bloody Armageddon?

This is just a taste of the confusion and contradiction that exists concerning the kingdom. But what is so frustrating is that all these views

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(and many more) on Christ's kingdom come from people who profess to read, believe, and obey the Bible. Does the Bible reveal all of these different plans and programs for Christ's kingdom? The simple answer is "no."

It has been said that, "You can make the Bible say anything you want it to." Now, if we handle it accurately and honestly, the Bible will only "say" what God intends for it to "say." However, the Bible warns that it can be misused and abused (2 Peter 3:15-16; Revelation 22:18-19). Only when Scripture is twisted, misrepresented, or altered (by addition or subtraction) can people make the Bible fit their notions. But the Bible, itself, is consistent and true.

Current disagreements and contradictory teachings about Christ's kingdom are a sign of people mishandling Scripture in some way; they do not show the Bible to be untrustworthy (2 Peter 3:15-16). As dispensationalist Dwight Pentecost writes:

No question facing the student of Eschatology is more important than the question of the method to be employed in the interpretation of the prophetic scriptures. The adoption of different methods of interpretation has produced the variant eschatological positions and accounts for the divergent views within a system that confront the student of prophecy.<sup>1</sup>

So Bible believers draw various conclusions about Christ's kingdom and the End Times because they do not read the Bible alike. They employ different methods of interpretation. Therefore, as we begin, it is important to consider how we shall approach the Scriptures in our study of *The King of Kings, His Glorious Kingdom, and His Promised Return*.

### **Respecting the Bible**

This Bible study rests on the conviction that the Bible is:

- **Inspired (2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21)**
- **Sufficient (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:31; Jude 3)**
- **Inerrant (John 8:32; 14:6; 16:13; 17:17)**

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*The Bible is Inspired.* The word inspired means “God breathed.” The Bible is revelation from God. The Scripture is what He has chosen to tell us. While God used many men to be writers, there is only one author of the Bible. Therefore, what the Bible says about the king and the kingdom is what God said on the matter.

*The Bible is Sufficient.* It is all that God has purposed to tell us to complete us for doctrine, worship, life, godliness, and equipment for every good work. While it may not answer every question we can conceive, it certainly provides all that is necessary for the good of our souls. And there is no other revelation or source of religious authority that we should turn to apart from the Bible. Therefore we must content ourselves with what the Scriptures say about the king and the kingdom—that is the entire truth of the matter.

*The Bible is Inerrant.* The Bible is true, without error. This is all or nothing. Either it is the very word of God, as it claims, or it is a horrific pack of lies. We don’t pick and choose which verses are “really” from God and which parts have been added by men. It is God’s Word. Therefore we can trust what the Scripture says about the king and the kingdom.

From this high regard for Scripture we move forward with the desire to speak “as the oracles of God” (1 Peter 4:11) on the subject of Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

## **Understanding the Bible**

God has not given us His word to confuse us or deceive us (1 Corinthians 14:33; Titus 1:2). The point of revelation is to make things known. We do not need a special method of Bible study or interpretation designed especially for our subject. Some may wonder if it is necessary, given the wild teachings about the kingdom in respect to Jesus’ Second Coming or the End Times. But like all other Bible studies, what is required is simple diligent work at reading the Scripture and handling it accurately (2 Timothy 2:15).



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Luke 10:25-37 gives Jesus' model for discerning the meaning of God's word. When He was questioned by a lawyer (a professional religious scholar) about understanding the Scriptures, Jesus provided the process of discernment that anyone can master.

First, Jesus asked, "What is written in the law?" (Luke 10:26). What does the Scripture say? This teaches Bible students about observation. Reading the Bible for all its worth begins with close observation of the text. We must read and reread passages to notice all that is there.

Second, Jesus asked, "What is your reading of it?" (Luke 10:26). What does the Scripture mean? This shows Bible students about interpretation. Based on all that has been observed, we determine the meaning.

Third, Jesus directed, "do this" (Luke 10:28), and, "Go and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). This instructs Bible students regarding application. Once Christians observe what the Word says, and understand what the Word means, they are to live according to the Word!

### **The Importance of Observation**

The Bible is literature. It should be read and interpreted as any other literary document, recognizing that there are different genres of literature. The Bible contains books of law, history, poetry, prophecy—even letters. Observing the kind of literature we are reading is fundamental to properly understanding it.

For instance, let's look at the book of Revelation. Good observation is the key to properly discerning John's message. What kind of literature is the book of Revelation? It is a book of prophecy (Revelation 1:3; 22:18-19). But notice that it is also an epistle—a letter (Revelation 1:4-6). This prophecy was written by the apostle John and addressed to seven churches in Asia (Revelation 1:1-4). This letter (like all the books of the Bible) was written for us, but it was not written to us. There is an

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immediate application for the seven churches of Asia. They were in the midst of trials, persecution, and tribulation (Revelation 1:9; 2:10, 13).

Notice that its message is communicated in a unique way—it is signified (Revelation 1:1). So we are told that in this letter God employed signs, symbols, and figures to communicate His Truth. Therefore, taking a wooden literalism to the book of Revelation is nonsensical. As Dr. Stafford North wrote:

The “rule of thumb” we use in every day language is that any statement that, on its face, is absurd or extreme if taken literally, is likely intended to be a figure of speech. The sports announcer, for example, may say a basketball player is “quick as lightning” or that a tight end is “like a bullet” down the sidelines. We immediately know how to switch from the literal to the figurative. So we come to Revelation with its long list of characters and events that appear absurd or extreme if taken literally, and we take them figuratively.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, we observe throughout the letter that the things communicated would be happening soon. These things would occur within the generation of the seven churches that received the letter (Revelation 1:1, 3; 3:11; 22:6-7, 10, 12, 20). North commented on our appreciation of the timeliness of the letter so that our interpretation is not mistaken:

In the verses where Jesus says “I come quickly,” He clearly is not speaking of His second coming. If He were, He would have been mistaken, for His second coming did not happen soon after the book was written. Rather, He was speaking of His coming to carry out the promises and predictions He makes in this book... So, when Christ promises to “come quickly” in Revelation, He does not mean that His second coming will be soon. Rather, He means He will “come quickly” to carry out the promises and threats He makes in Revelation.<sup>3</sup>

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Taken together, these observations show that interpreting the book of Revelation with wooden literalism—understanding it to forecast world events of two thousand years (or more) in the future—would be mistaken. The book of Revelation has important things to say about Christ’s kingdom, but it has nothing to do with the premillennial and dispensational models of current End Times prophecy experts.

Observation will be our main tool in looking at many of the prophecies and texts for this study. We want to observe the details of a text and pay attention to its context within a chapter, within a book, and within the whole of the Bible. No portion of Scripture can be understood to outright contradict another portion of Scripture.

### **Tools for Interpretation**

When it comes to interpreting Scripture, we need to remember that, as with all speech, everything is not necessarily literal. Speakers and writers employ symbolism, hyperbole, metaphors, and allegory. A person can easily be misunderstood when they are using a metaphor if it is taken literally. It happened to Jesus.

Consider John 2:19-20. Jesus’ words were immediately interpreted by those angered with His cleansing the temple to pertain to Herod’s Temple. In fact, Jesus was speaking of the temple of His body and foretelling the resurrection. Jesus was speaking truthfully but not literally. John interprets His words, and we see that Jesus was using figurative language (John 2:21-22).

Again, when Jesus referred to “that fox” Herod (Luke 13:31-32), He was not saying that the king was literally a *Vulpes vulpes* of the Canidae family. It was a figure of speech.

The Scripture itself is the best interpreter of Scripture. We can compare the usage of words or imagery in one text to its other usages throughout the Bible. We will see that much of the symbolic language in the New Testament actually appeared in the Old Testament first. By considering its use in the Old Testament, we can more easily interpret the New!

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Finally, some Old Testament prophecies are identified as fulfilled in the New Testament. There are instances where the apostles or other inspired writers cite Old Testament prophecy and declare it to be fulfilled. They say, “This is That.” And that settles that!

For instance, in Acts 2:16-17, Peter quotes the Old Testament prophet Joel. He says that the events of Pentecost are the fulfillment of Joel’s words pertaining to “the last days.” Later Peter preached to a multitude that all the Old Testament prophets, from Moses to Samuel on down, were proclaiming “these days” (Acts 3:22-24). Because the inspired apostles interpreted Old Testament “last days” language to refer to the first century events surrounding the Messiah, any prophecy expert today that goes to the Old Testament to bolster their theories about End Times scenarios are at least 2,000 years off the mark!

We must be vigilant in our observation and interpretation of the Scriptures as it pertains to Christ’s kingdom. Too many have strayed away from what the Bible simply reveals on the matter. That is why there are vast differences in understanding the kingdom. That is why there is much false teaching about it.

## **The Compass**

Many popular prophecy experts strictly associate Christ’s kingdom with the End Times. They speak of the Bible as if it is a Doomsday Clock whose “signs of the times” are counting us down to the end of the world. But the Bible is no such Clock.

Instead, the Bible is a Life Compass. It shows us the way of righteousness and truth. It gives us direction for life so that we can know the true God, serve Him, worship Him, and go to be with Him in heaven. It reveals all God would have us to know about our savior, *the King of Kings, His Glorious Kingdom, and His Promised Return*. The Bible is our Kingdom Guide.

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**Lesson 1 Questions**

1. Would you agree that people like to imagine and speculate about the kingdom of Christ? If so, why do you think this is?
2. What kinds of things have you heard self-professed Christians say about the kingdom?
3. Why is it important to study the king, His kingdom, and His promised return?
4. “You can make the Bible say anything you want it to.” What must be done to the Bible in order for this statement to be true?
5. What cause did Dwight Pentecost suggest for the problem of self-professed Bible students all having different understandings of the kingdom and the End Times?
6. What does “inspired” mean as it is used in 2 Timothy 3:16?

