

# The Post-AD 70 Kingdom: A Comprehensive Study

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**I**NTRODUCTION. This paper explores the historical, theological, and biblical foundations of the Kingdom Age, examining key teachings from Jesus's ministry and addressing differing perspectives, such as Edward Stevens' rapture theory. Through a blend of scriptural analysis, prophetic connections, and spiritual insights, this study highlights the enduring mission of the Church and the fulfillment of Jesus's prophecies.

## Historical Context: AD 70 and Its Aftermath

The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 stands as one of the most pivotal events in both Jewish and Christian history. This event marked the fulfillment of Jesus' warnings, with Christians fleeing to Pella to escape the destruction. The Church's dispersion allowed for the expansion of its mission. Despite limited historical records, figures like Eusebius affirm the continuity and resilience of the early Christian community.

- **Widespread Chaos:** The aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction was marked by displacement and instability.
- **Decentralization of the Church:** With Jerusalem no longer central, Christian communities spread to other cities like Antioch and Rome.
- **Early Christian Practices:** Small, scattered communities faced challenges in documenting their history during times of upheaval.

This practical understanding refutes claims that the historical silence signifies a removal of the church. Instead, it aligns with the adaptability of believers in fulfilling the Kingdom's mission.

## Biblical Analysis of Rapture Verses

Key passages frequently associated with the Rapture, such as 1 Thessalonians 4:17 and Matthew 24, can be better understood through a metaphorical lens that emphasizes the fullness of the Kingdom of God.

- **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:** The imagery of being “*caught up in the clouds*” symbolizes the glorification and exaltation of believers in the presence of Christ, rather than a physical removal from Earth. The “*meeting in the air*” reflects the cultural practice of welcoming a king.
- **Matthew 24:40-41:** The contrast of being “taken” or “left” refers to judgment rather than Rapture. Those “taken” face judgment, while the faithful remain as participants in the Kingdom.

These passages highlight themes of transformation and participation in the Kingdom’s fullness, aligning seamlessly with the teachings of Jesus.

## **The Kingdom of Heaven and Prophetic Fulfillment**

Paul’s teachings, often seen as the source for “Rapture” theology, align closely with Old Testament prophecies regarding the Kingdom of God.

- **Restoration and Renewal:**
  - *Isaiah 11:6-9:* A vision of peace and righteousness
  - *Romans 8:21-23:* Paul speaks of liberation from decay
- **Messianic Rule:**
  - *Isaiah 9:6-7:* A prophecy of a just and eternal government
  - *1 Corinthians 15:24-25:* Paul describes Christ’s reign and triumph over all enemies
- **Resurrection and Life:**
  - *Isaiah 26:19* and *Daniel 12:2:* Prophecies of resurrection
  - *1 Thessalonians 4:16-17:* Paul mirrors this hope in resurrection for believers
- **Gathering of God’s People:**
  - *Isaiah 27:12-13:* A gathering of exiles
  - *Ephesians 1:9-10:* Paul speaks of God uniting all under Christ

These prophetic themes demonstrate that Paul’s writings were consistent with God’s redemptive plan, emphasizing the Kingdom’s establishment rather than removal through a Rapture.

## **Days of Preparation: Foundation of the Kingdom**

Jesus’s early ministry served as the “Days of Preparation,” equipping His followers for the Kingdom of God. This foundational period was essential for teaching the values of the Kingdom, strengthening the faith of His disciples, and preparing for the transformative events that would establish the Church.

## Training Disciples

During this time, Jesus devoted Himself to teaching, demonstrating, and empowering His followers. He provided them with practical lessons on faith, humility, and servant leadership. Through parables, sermons, and personal interactions, Jesus instilled the principles of the Kingdom into His disciples. Miracles, such as feeding the 5,000 and healing the sick, served not only to meet physical needs but also to reveal the power and nature of God's reign. By sending the disciples out to preach and heal (Matthew 10), He actively prepared them to carry forward His mission.

## Establishing Principles

Jesus emphasized foundational Kingdom principles such as repentance, love, and justice. He called people to turn away from sin and align their lives with God's will, proclaiming, "*Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*" (Matt 4:17 The Kingdom Bible<sup>1</sup>). His teachings in the Sermon on the Mount laid out a radical vision for living as Kingdom citizens, including the command to love one's enemies and practice mercy. These principles created a framework for a community grounded in righteousness and compassion, preparing believers to embody Kingdom values in their daily lives.

## Building Community

Jesus gathered and united a diverse group of individuals—fishermen, tax collectors, and others—to form the foundation of the early Church. He emphasized the importance of relationships and servanthood, stating, "*Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant*" (Matt 20:26). By modeling a life of humility and selflessness, Jesus established a community that reflected the inclusive and transformative nature of the Kingdom. This group would become the nucleus of the Church, tasked with spreading the gospel and fostering unity among believers.

## Fulfillment of Prophecy

Jesus's ministry was deeply rooted in fulfilling Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. His actions, such as riding into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zech 9:9), healing the blind and lame (Isa 35:5-6), and preaching good news to the poor (Isa 61:1), demonstrated that He was the promised Savior. These

fulfillments affirmed the divine origin of His mission and provided assurance to His followers that they were witnessing the arrival of the Kingdom foretold by the prophets.

### **Preparing for Ultimate Sacrifice**

Jesus used this preparatory period to lay the groundwork for His redemptive work on the cross. He repeatedly foretold His death and resurrection to His disciples, helping them understand the necessity of His sacrifice (Matt 16:21). Through the institution of the Lord's Supper, He symbolically pointed to His body and blood as the basis of the new covenant (Luke 22:19-20). This ultimate act of love would become the cornerstone of the Kingdom, offering salvation and reconciliation to all who believe.

To further prepare His followers, Jesus frequently taught about the nature of the Kingdom using parables, likening it to things they could grasp in everyday life. Whether describing the Kingdom as a mustard seed (Matt 13:31-32), leaven in dough (Matt 13:33), or treasure hidden in a field (Matt 13:44), these vivid illustrations highlighted the transformative, expansive, and valuable essence of God's reign. These teachings were meant to instill hope and understanding, providing a vision of what the Kingdom would become.

In addition, Jesus delivered sobering messages about the urgency of repentance and the cost of discipleship. He declared that the removal of a body part was preferable to the entire body being cast into the fire (Matt 5:29-30, 18:8-9). These statements underscored the seriousness of sin and the necessity of personal transformation. Such drastic metaphors also conveyed the magnitude of what was at stake—eternal participation in the Kingdom of God.

Paul echoed this urgency when he exhorted believers to “*work out your salvation with fear and trembling*” (Phil 2:12). This call to self-examination and active faith resonates with the preparatory nature of Jesus's ministry. Both emphasized that the Kingdom required a response—commitment, repentance, and alignment with God's will.

This preparation period was pivotal for transitioning into the Kingdom Age, where the promises of God would be fulfilled. Jesus's teachings not only clarified the values of the Kingdom but also prepared His followers to live within its transformative reality. Through their response to His message and their acceptance of His ultimate sacrifice, believers were ready to embrace their roles as Kingdom participants.

They became vessels of growth, community, and change, carrying the light of the Kingdom into the world and demonstrating its eternal influence.

### **Metaphorical Interpretation of Rapture Passages**

The so-called “Rapture” passages, when viewed metaphorically, emphasize the Kingdom’s transformative power rather than physical removal. This interpretation highlights the spiritual and symbolic richness of the texts, offering a perspective that aligns with the overarching narrative of Scripture.

### **Clouds: Represent God’s Divine Presence**

Throughout the Bible, clouds symbolize God’s glory and divine presence. In the Old Testament, clouds accompanied God during pivotal moments, such as leading the Israelites in the wilderness (Exod 13:21-22) and descending upon Mount Sinai (Exod 19:16). In the New Testament, a cloud enveloped Jesus during the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5). Viewing “clouds” in Rapture passages as metaphors underscores the idea of believers being enveloped in God’s glory as they participate in the fullness of the Kingdom.

### **Trumpet Call: Marks the Announcement of the Kingdom’s Fullness**

Trumpets hold significant symbolic meaning in Scripture, often signaling divine intervention or momentous events. In Exodus 19:16-19, a trumpet blast accompanied God’s descent upon Mount Sinai, heralding His covenant with Israel. Similarly, the “*trumpet call of God*” in 1 Thessalonians 4:16 represents the proclamation of the Kingdom’s arrival in its fullness. Rather than marking physical removal, the trumpet metaphorically announces the transformative culmination of God’s redemptive plan.

### **Meeting in the Air: Depicts Spiritual Exaltation and Unity with Christ**

The imagery of meeting the Lord “*in the air*” can be understood as a cultural metaphor for welcoming a sovereign or dignitary. In ancient practices, citizens would meet a visiting king outside their city gates to escort him in triumph. Similarly, this metaphor depicts believers spiritually honoring Christ and entering into profound unity with Him as the Kingdom reaches its completeness. It emphasizes exaltation and celebration rather than a literal departure from Earth.

## Alignment with Kingdom Teaching

This metaphorical interpretation aligns seamlessly with the principles and teachings of the Kingdom of God. Here's how:

- **Inclusion and Transformation:** Believers are spiritually transformed, embracing their role within God's reign. This emphasizes the transformative power of the Kingdom in shaping lives and communities.
- **Continuity of Mission:** The Church remains active in fulfilling the Great Commission. This view rejects escapism and reaffirms the Church's vital role in expanding the Kingdom and living out its values.
- **Celebration of Fulfillment:** These passages inspire hope and joy as believers celebrate the realization of God's promises and His eternal reign.

This interpretation aligns with the prophetic hope of restoration and the realization of the Kingdom. It shifts focus from removal to transformation, encouraging believers to actively participate in God's redemptive work and embrace their role in the Kingdom Age.

## Conclusion

The post-AD 70 Kingdom age exemplifies the fulfillment of Jesus's teachings and the prophets' visions. By embracing the metaphorical interpretation of "Rapture" passages, we can see the harmony between Paul's writings and the prophetic tradition. This understanding reinforces the Church's mission as an active participant in the transformative work of the Kingdom, living in the "already" while anticipating the "not yet."

Additionally, it is crucial to remain steadfast within the boundaries of Scripture, preserving the even flow of its teachings. The Bible presents a coherent and unified narrative, emphasizing themes of redemption, restoration, and the fulfillment of God's Kingdom. Sudden interpretations or doctrinal insertions that conflict with this flow risk detracting from the richness of the Kingdom's message and the integrity of God's revealed truth. By carefully aligning our understanding with the overarching story of Scripture, we ensure that our beliefs are both faithful to its divine inspiration and consistent with its transformative power.

**In Acts 26:22**, Paul explicitly states, *“Having therefore obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come.”*

Paul’s teaching was firmly rooted in the Scriptures, particularly the writings of the prophets and the law of Moses. He consistently emphasized that the message of Christ fulfilled the promises and prophecies found in the Old Testament. By doing so, he demonstrated that the gospel was not a departure from Jewish tradition but its culmination, bringing together the threads of prophecy into their ultimate fulfillment in Jesus.

The concept of the “Rapture,” as many modern Christians understand it, is not explicitly taught by Moses or the prophets in the Old Testament. The idea of the Church being “caught up” to meet the Lord comes primarily from the New Testament, particularly Paul’s writings, such as 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17. This passage describes believers being caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord, a cornerstone text for the Rapture doctrine.

However, some interpret certain Old Testament passages as foreshadowing or symbolizing aspects of the Rapture. For example:

**Enoch’s translation (Genesis 5:24):** Enoch is described as walking with God, and then God “took him.” This has been seen by some as a type or shadow of a sudden removal from Earth.

**Elijah’s ascension (2 Kings 2:11):** Elijah being taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire is often cited as another possible prefiguration.

**Isaiah 26:19-21:** This passage speaks of the dead rising and a call for God’s people to enter their chambers until His wrath passes. Some see this as an early vision of resurrection and protection.

The prophets often spoke about the Day of the Lord and God’s judgment, which many link to eschatological themes, but these messages were more focused on Israel’s restoration, the coming Messiah, and God’s kingdom, rather than the distinct concept of a Rapture.

The Kingdom of God (heaven) is the crucial culmination of the end of the age and the installation of the new heaven and new earth in its eternal position encompassing all things. Even the realm of the unseen

was a recipient of the fulfilled Kingdom of God in Christ Jesus. For me, it is impossible to think that a brand-new idea, presented by Paul no less, who claimed to teach only that which was given from Moses and the prophets, could even be a truthful message for the Church.

This deeply rooted theological principle, that the Kingdom of God, as the fulfillment of God's plan, encompasses all realms—seen and unseen—in its eternal consummation through Christ, stands as the culmination of prophetic promises and the central theme of Scripture. Indeed, Paul's insistence on teaching nothing but what Moses and the prophets foretold emphasizes continuity rather than the introduction of brand-new concepts alien to the biblical narrative.

The idea of the Kingdom being fulfilled in Christ resonates powerfully with prophecies such as Isaiah 9:7, which speaks of the Messiah's government and peace having no end, and Daniel 7:13-14, where the Son of Man is given dominion and glory, establishing an everlasting Kingdom. Paul's writings consistently affirm these themes, demonstrating how Jesus embodies and fulfills these Old Testament promises.

My skepticism toward ideas presented as entirely new seems well-founded. The gospel, according to Paul, is a revelation of the mysteries long-hidden but foretold by Scripture (Rom 16:25-26). It bridges what was anticipated and what is now realized. For the Church, this understanding roots its identity firmly in the fulfillment of God's ancient covenant and eternal Kingdom. ✝

This article first appeared at <https://preteristarchives.org/the-post-ad-70-kingdom-age>.

1. <https://thekingdombible.org/>