

Book Review: The Messiah's Mission Accomplished

The Messiah's Mission Accomplished by James Bales, Cobb Publishing, c. 2017, 269 pp. ISBN: 9781544297989. Cost:

The Messiah's Mission Accomplished was written by James Bales and published posthumously by Bradley S. Cobb with permission from Mark McWhorter who has all of the publishing rights to Bales' books. The book is the result of a discovery of an unpublished manuscript by Bales that was discovered among his other manuscripts and books.

Bales' book is comprised of an introduction followed by eight chapters and a bibliography. The book's main goal is to dismantle the arguments made by Premillennialists regarding the kingdom of God.

In order to accomplish this goal, Bales' examines why Jesus came to this earth, the terminology in the New Testament that declares that the kingdom was "at hand"; the nature of the kingdom promised; the time of the establishment of the kingdom; the prophecy of Daniel; the postponement theory; the church age foretold by the prophets, and a final chapter on the assumption that Israel would have accepted the premillennial kingdom.

Bales' interacts primarily with the writings of John F. Walvoord. The manuscript serves as a thorough refutation of Walvoord's works, *The Blessed Hope and the Tribulation* and *The Millennial Kingdom*. He also interacts with the writings of R. H. Boll: *Lessons on Daniel, The Kingdom of God* and *The Revelation*. Both of these men are mentioned by name numerous times by Bales.

In the Introduction, Bales shows why a study of Premillennialism is important. He gives six reasons. Among them, he affirms that Premillennialism involves a way of interpreting the entire Bible that does not harmonize with what one would expect from studying the New Testament. He also states that it gives aid and comfort to Jewish delusions and it could be a factor in getting the United States into war over Jerusalem.

Bales addresses the purpose of Jesus' first coming in chapter one. This chapter affirms that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah. The chapter consists of 56 pages which give the following reasons for Christ's coming the first time: to reveal God, to do God's Will, to fulfill the Law and the Prophets, to preach that the kingdom was "at hand", to become the king of the kingdom of truth, to reveal the nature of the kingdom, to become our high priest, to be our example, to serve His fellowman, to reveal the abundant life, to bring to naught the power of the devil, to bring many sons to glory, to deliver man from the bondage of death, to unite men in Himself, but, also, to separate men regarding love and faith in Him, to judge between the profane and the holy, to be the savior of the world, to go the way of the cross in order to obtain redemption, and to train His disciples to carry on the important work of soul-winning. Bales' closes the chapter by affirming that Jesus accomplished what He came to the earth to do.

In chapter two, Bales looks at the language in the New Testament used by Jesus and John to reveal that the kingdom was "at hand." The word "at hand" was used around forty-two times in the New Testament (62). "At hand meant *nearby in point of time or place*", Bales declares. (62). When Premillennialists affirm the postponement theory regarding the time of the establishment of the kingdom, they deny the plain preaching of Jesus and John.

The kingdom prophesied by the prophets came on the day of Pentecost in the city of Jerusalem. The kingdom was not postponed until the Second Coming of Jesus. At the Second

Coming of Jesus, the kingdom will be delivered up to the Father (I Cor. 15:24). The Old Testament clearly distinguished between His reign at God's right hand and His second coming (Psa. 110:1-4). Psa. 110:1 was fulfilled on Pentecost (Acts 2:34-36). Jesus reigns now until He puts all enemies under His feet and the last enemy, death, is to be conquered at the last day (I Cor. 15:24-28; I Pet. 1:5; Rev. 20:11-15). This "last day" will be when Jesus comes the second time (74-75). Some Premillennialists affirm that the Old Testament predicted that the kingdom would be set up at Jesus' second coming. Bales shows that this is utterly false (85-86).

In chapter three, Bales examines the nature of the kingdom. He makes the following points: (1) Jesus was born king of the Jews (Matt. 2:2) but He did not become king at His birth. He became king at the same time He became a priest, i.e. at His ascension into heaven (Dan. 7:13, 14). John the Baptist and Jesus taught that the kingdom was "at hand" clearly indicating that it was not in existence during Jesus' personal ministry. (2) Jesus was king of the Jews (Luke 1:32, 33). Many of the Jews rejected Jesus because of their mistaken concepts of the nature of the kingdom. However, many also accepted Him (Acts 2:37-38). (3) The nature of the kingdom coincided with the nature of Jesus' mission which was to save mankind from sin. Consequently, the kingdom is spiritual in nature. Satan during the temptation of Christ endeavored to change the nature of the kingdom (Matt. 4:8-10). Jesus resisted Satan and maintained the spiritual nature of the kingdom. (4) Bales affirms that one's fleshly relationship to Jesus did not determine one's kingdom relationship to Jesus (Matt. 12:46-50, Luke 8:19-21; 11:28). "My mother and my brethren are these that hear the word of God and do it", Jesus said. This relationship is spiritual in nature and not physical. (5) Humility would be essential to enter into the kingdom (Matt. 16:16-19). (6) Those in the kingdom would be merciful (Matt. 18:21-23; Matt. 5:7). (7) The wrong attitude toward riches could keep one out of the kingdom (Matt. 19:23-24). Those who trust in riches will have a difficult time entering the kingdom (this shows the kingdom is not a physical, worldly kingdom). (7) There are those who were able to marry, but who would not marry so that they could devote themselves to service in the kingdom (Matt. 19:12). This does not refer to a physical kingdom, but a spiritual kingdom. (8) Publicans and harlots would go into the kingdom before the chief priests and the elders (Matt. 21:29-32 and Luke 7:29-30). Publicans were baptized by John, but the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God. In this manner, some were prepared for the kingdom while others were not. Clearly, the kingdom is spiritual in nature. (9) Christ is the meek ruler ruling over the kingdom of the meek (Mark 11:1-9 and Matt. 5:5). (10) Jesus clearly affirmed that the kingdom of God is within you (Luke 17:20-21). The kingdom is defined by the rule of Christ in the hearts of men. (11) The apostles misunderstood the nature of the kingdom and were rebuked by Jesus (Luke 22:24-30). (12) Jesus taught that the kingdom would be taken away from the Jewish religious leaders and given to others (Matt. 21:33-36). (13) Jesus declared that many in Israel would be cast out and the Gentiles allowed to sit in the kingdom (Luke 13:23-30). Bales completes a survey of the teaching of the New Testament concerning the nature of the kingdom by making many more references that indicate the spiritual nature of the kingdom. The ones given here are sufficient to prove his affirmations.

Bales takes an in-depth look at the time of the establishment of the kingdom in chapter four. Jesus not only announced that the kingdom was "at hand", but He also declared that it would come in the lifetime of some to whom He spoke (Matt. 4:17; Mark 9:1). Bales shows that the kingdom came on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus from the dead and after His ascension and coronation. Peter declared this to be true (Acts 2:30-36). The kingdom was to come with power during the lifetime of some standing by when Jesus spoke to them (Mark 9:1).

The power Jesus spoke of was that of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). The Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). When the power came (the Holy Spirit) the kingdom came (Mark 9:1). Peter preached Jesus was ruling at God's right hand on the same day. Bales shows that Peter was given the keys to the kingdom and that these keys were used on Pentecost when the gospel was preached (Matt. 16:18-19). The kingdom is the church (Acts 2:47). The keys given to Peter symbolize authority. Through the preaching of the gospel, the door of salvation was opened to the Jew first and then to the Gentile (Acts 10, 11). Before Pentecost, the disciples asked Jesus if the kingdom would be restored to Israel (Acts 1:6). Jesus taught that the kingdom would be taken from the unbelieving Jews and given to another group of people (Matt. 21:41-43). Bales remarks, "It should be noticed that after Pentecost the apostles never asked whether God would restore the kingdom to Israel" (154). This is noteworthy and gives an insight that should be clear to all unprejudiced minds, namely, that the kingdom was now in existence and the disciples understood the nature of it. The apostles and New Testament evangelists preached that the kingdom was in existence (Acts 8:12; Col. 1:13). Paul knew Jesus was reigning (Eph. 1:20-23; Col. 3:1; I Cor. 15:24-28).

In chapter five, Bales reveals the basic aspects of the prophecy of Daniel 2. Bales is intent on showing that Daniel prophesied of the same kingdom that was established on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. He shows that the kingdom prophesied by Daniel was to be established in the days of the Roman kings (Dan. 2:44) and that this could not occur at Jesus' Second Coming because there is no prophecy that the Roman Empire will return to glory at that time. He also shows that in regards to the continuity of Daniel's prophecy, the Roman kings follow the rule of the Grecian kings. There is a progression in the historical development of Daniel's prophecy (Daniel 2) in which the Babylonian empire is followed by the Medo-Persian empire which is followed by the Grecian empire and then the Roman empire. The historical progression follows a chronological progression and makes the time of the establishment of the kingdom during the days of the Roman emperors that ruled at the time of Christ. This is why Jesus said, in His day, that the kingdom was "at hand." This destroys the theory of Premillennialism.

In chapter six, Bales addresses the postponement theory affirmed by many Premillennialists. The postponement theory, as proposed by R. H. Boll is refuted by Bales (173). The theory basically affirms that since the Jews rejected Christ, Christ postponed the establishment of His kingdom and instead substituted the church. Consequently, the Premillennialists teach that the church and the kingdom are not the same entity. Bales asks, "Where are the prophecies which show that the kingdom which was at hand in the first century is now prophesied to be established at His second coming? (175). The answer is that there are none. Bales shows that the fulfillment of Psalm 2 shatters the postponement theory. The rejection of Christ by the Jews could not prevent the kingdom from being established. In fact, the kingdom was established in spite of their obstinence and opposition. Bales gives an analysis of the kingdom message before the parables, in the parables, and after the parables. The parables reveal the nature of the kingdom showing that it was and is a spiritual kingdom. The parables show that the kingdom revealed by them was and is the spiritual kingdom established by Christ and the apostles. The parables show that the rejection by the Jews of Christ led to the destruction of the nation of Israel. The kingdom was taken from them and given to another. Christ is the hope of Israel now.

Bales interacts with the teaching of John Walvoord in chapter seven. The question raised is, "Was the church age predicted by the prophets?" Walvoord recognizes that if the church age is predicted by the prophets, then, premillennialism is false. Bales affirms, "If the church age

was not prophesied, the gospel was not prophesied, for the church age is the gospel age. Christ purchased the church with His own blood (Acts 20:28). If redemption was prophesied, of necessity the redeemed group was prophesied (Isaiah 53) (191). A key concept advanced by premillennialists is that Israel will be restored to its former glory among the nations of the world. This involves reconstituting the Law of Moses and the Jewish practices related to that law. This forces premillennialists to affirm that the Law of Moses and the Law of Christ will be in force at the same time. Could this be possible? Bales shows that it could not be possible (239-240). Bales shows from scripture that Christ is reigning now. Christ has been reigning since His ascension and coronation over a spiritual kingdom (the church) and when he comes the second time, He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father (I Cor. 15:24). There will not be an earthly kingdom established at the time of Christ's second coming.

In the final chapter, chapter eight, Bales affirms that Israel (at the time of Christ) would have accepted the premillennial kingdom. The Jews wanted a physical, worldly kingdom. If Christ has been such an earthly king, they would have accepted Him (John 6:15). Bales shows that Jewish nationalism was one reason that the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus did not fit their expectations of the Messiah. To the Jews, religion was subservient to nationalism. Jesus did not preach Jewish nationalism. Therefore, the Jews, for the most part, rejected Him. Consequently, Jesus predicted their end which came at the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Matthew 24). Now, both Jew and Gentile have their hope in Jesus Christ and in the church which is His spiritual kingdom (Eph. 2:16).

Many, if not most, of the tenets of premillennialism are refuted by Bales in this book. At the same time, Bales affirms that the church is the spiritual kingdom of God and that all spiritual blessings are found in Christ. These spiritual blessings are available to Jew and Gentile alike in the kingdom God planned before the foundation of the world (Eph. 3:10-11).