

Preface

Destiny and Greatness

In ancient Judah, there was a king named Amon. He became king at the ripe old age of twenty-two. The scriptures record that he did evil in the sight of the Lord, like his father Manasseh had done before him. Not only was he evil in the sight of the Lord, but his own servants apparently didn't think to highly of him either; they conspired against him and killed him in his own house. But the people of the land decided that servants who would do such a thing shouldn't be calling the shots either so they rose up and executed those servants who conspired against the king, and made Amon's son, Josiah, king in his place. Josiah was only eight!

Now an eight year-old king, whose father and grandfather were evil sounds like a recipe for disaster. But I guess even at the age of eight, one can figure out that doing the things that got your dad killed is not a good idea. Or maybe Josiah had people around him who advised him wisely. Nevertheless, it seems the chaos subsided and the nation carried on.

Eight years passed and, during a repair project to the House of the Lord, Josiah sent his servants to count the money stored in the Lord's House and deliver it to the workers to buy materials for the repairs. So as a seasoned 16 year-old Josiah is apparently doing okay. He was taking care of things like jobs and the economy. But when they went to count the money, they found something else that had apparently gotten buried beneath the piles of money — The Book of God's Law.

When they brought the book of the law to Josiah and read it to him, he was greatly distraught. He realized that, because the nation was disobeying God's law and were worshiping idols and false gods, the wrath of God Almighty was about to be poured out upon them. But when God saw that Josiah humbled his heart and wept over the nation's sin, He drew back His hand of judgment and promised Josiah that the calamity spoken against that place would not happen in Josiah's days. Josiah had the Book of the Covenant read before the people and he made a covenant to keep the laws and statutes with all his heart and soul and all the people took a stand for the covenant. Josiah removed all the articles of idolatry from the House of the Lord, removed the false priests and cleansed the land of idolatry. He even burned the bones of the false prophets who had led the nation into idolatry! It was said of Josiah, that there had never been a king before him who turned to the Lord with all his heart, soul, and strength, nor did any arise after him.

But there is more to the story. What exactly did Josiah read that so gripped his heart and brought him to such deep repentance? Yes, he read the law of God and that undoubtedly guided his righteous response. But many years before Josiah was born, there was another king who did evil in the sight of the Lord by the name of Jeroboam. Jeroboam installed priests for the high places of idolatrous worship and defiled the altar at Bethel by sacrificing and burning incense upon it. Because of this evil thing a man of God spoke a prophecy about that place.

Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, "O altar, altar!

Thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men's bones shall be burned on you.'"(1 Kings 13:2 NKJV)

This is what Josiah read in the Book of the Law. He read about himself and understood his destiny! That is why he took the bones of the false priests and burned them on the altar.

As Josiah turned, he saw the tombs that were there on the mountain. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar, and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these words.(2 Kings 23:16 NKJV)

Now you and I may not find prophecies in the Bible about ourselves that are as specific as the prophecy Josiah found. But the Word of God certainly gives us information concerning our destiny and, because of our relationship with Jesus Christ, we can come to know and understand our destiny in a very specific way.

In this study we will lay the foundation for understanding our specific destinies. As we build this foundation in our hearts and walk in obedience, we can all achieve greatness because to fulfill one's destiny is the definition of greatness.

Preface
?The Five Point System?

Part I
Where We Came From and Where We are Going

Introduction to Part I

The Elements of a True Witness (Slide 1)

There is nothing so pathetic as the person who does not know who they are. I grew up with Christian influence and, though I believed in Jesus Christ from a young age, Jesus was not my Lord. There came a time, as a teenager, when the lure of worldliness overcame my religion and I consciously rebelled against God and what I knew deep in my heart was right.

Rebellion, thought it looked fun and exciting, led me into the most confusing period of my life. As is commonly the case, my pursuit of worldliness also involved a peer group of like-minded individuals that served as a sort of support group which rationalized and encouraged the way of worldliness. Also common in such peer groups is the intense need to be accepted into this group. Though I was unaware of it at the time, it is painfully clear in hindsight just how pathetic I was. Blinded by the insecure desire to fit into the group, I had no conviction of my own. I was not being myself. I was a chameleon trying to change myself into whatever seemed to be “cool.”

I found myself pushing the limits of my own moral boundaries, and often doing things that I really did not want to do. I drank beer even though I hated the taste of it. I used foul language, even though I would often feel repulsed by the ugliness of it. I would lie to my parents about where I was going and attend parties where drugs and alcohol were present.

At one party, I remember going to the restroom and while washing my hands, I looked at myself in the mirror. I did not like what I saw so I quickly looked away and went back to the party. But in that fleeting moment, I saw the truth about myself. I was a silly boy, half drunk and totally phony. I didn't know who I was and I had no direction for my life.

A Credible Witness (Slide 2)

If there was ever a person on earth who embodied truth, conviction and clear purpose, it was Jesus Christ. He faced every temptation that we face, yet He never compromised His purpose or wavered in any way. He was absolutely secure in Himself and confident in fulfilling His destiny. Why? The scripture below reveals why.

Jesus answered and said to them, "Even if I bear witness of Myself, **My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going;** but you do not know where I come from and where I am going. (John 8:14 NKJV)

We can have the same kind of clarity and purpose that Jesus had, but to have it, we must be anchored in the same principles. If we want to have a true, confident and clear witness, we must know where we came from and where we are going.

Part I
Section 1.

(Maybe a “graybox” just on the future. See the gray box at the beginning of Part I, Sec 2.)

Chapter One

Basics About the Future

Can We Know? (Slide 3: Basics About The Future)

Before we look at some of the basics about the future, let's address this very important question: "Can we know?" Many have simply taken the position that no one knows anyway and have "thrown up their hands" saying, "Why bother?" Admittedly, no one sees the end times completely. By nature, the future is unclear and naturally difficult to discern. But God sees the future clearly and promises to reveal it to us. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "He will tell you things to come" (John 16:13). "Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, Unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7). So the answer is clearly "Yes! We can know the future."

Why the Battle? (Slide 4: Basics About The Future- Can We Know Future?)

Understanding the future always seems to be a hotly debated topic. There is no shortage of confusion and differing opinions. As George E. Ladd has observed, it is a topic that unfortunately tends to "*generate more heat than light.*" Many avoid this topic for that reason, but we should not simply ignore it because of a fear of stirring up controversy. Vision is a word that speaks of the future and God's Word says, "Where there is no vision, the people perish" (Prov. 29:18 KJV). It is far too important to ignore.

Understanding the future is more critical to the present than what we have realized. The Zondervan Bible Dictionary says this about eschatology (study of the last things): *Eschatology is not designed to satisfy curiosity but to provide an intelligent comprehension of the future as a guide for a present program, and a sure ground for hope.*¹ In other words, understanding the future is foundational and helps us function properly in the present. Therefore, we must establish at least a general eschatological view for the sake of having a sense of direction.

If a proper view of the future can help provide a sense of destiny and direction in the present, then it stands to reason that an improper view of the future would cause a lack of purpose and misdirection. Therefore, Satan works double time to create multiple smoke screens in this area. He knows a simple fact, that everyone makes plans based on their perception of the future. Therefore, if he can distort our perception of the future, he can more easily manipulate and misdirect our present plans and actions. When a Christian is effectively diverted off course he may have eternal life but be ineffective in God's strategy to bring His Kingdom to Earth as it is in Heaven. This is why there is a spiritual battle against our understanding of the future.

(Slide 5: Basics About The Future-Eschatology)

(Slide 6: Basics About The Future - Why the Battle)

(Slide 7: Basics About The Future - Again John 8:14))

(Slide 8-9: Basics About The Future - Axiom of the Future)

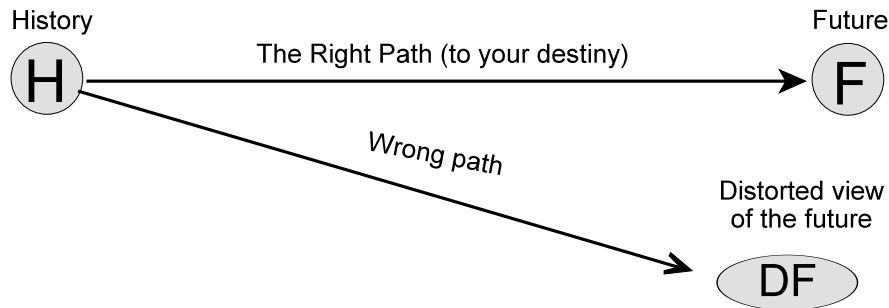
The diagram below illustrates very simply how a distorted view of the future can also cause us to miss our destiny. If we have an accurate view of history (H) and an accurate view of the future (F), it is a simple matter to plot a course for our present plans and actions on the right path. But even

¹Zondervan Pictorial Bible Dictionary, p. 259

if we have an accurate view of history, yet have a distorted view of the future (DF), then our plans in the present will be on the wrong path. As we build an understanding of God's strategy for the appearing and establishment of His kingdom, we will continue to add to and modify our diagram.

Again, Jesus said, "My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am

Destiny Diagram



going" (John 8:14), therefore, he had absolute confidence in his current plans and actions. Concerning the future and planning you should remember this axiom of destiny called The Axiom of the Future:

(Slide 3: Basics About The Future)

We make plans and take action in the present based on how we perceive the future.

Now we see that it is important to have an accurate view of the future, before we can act confidently in the present. Therefore, our understanding of the future is very important.

Three Basics About The Future

(Slide 10: 3 Basics About The Future)

(Slide 11: 3 Basics About The Future - Resurrection)

1) *Resurrection.* The resurrection is central to the Christian faith and is one of the basics about the future. It is the great event that brings us the final victory over death. The promise of resurrection and immortality gives us hope, comfort, motivation, and purpose. "If the dead are not raised," Paul said, "Why are we also in danger every hour?" (1 Cor. 15:29,30). Good question. If I had no hope of resurrection (eternal life), the return of Christ to look forward to and to work toward, then why do I put myself in a position to be ridiculed and accused by those who do not believe? Why do I pour my life out for people, some of whom abandon the purpose of God? Why would I waste my time writing this? "If the dead do not rise, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die" (1 Cor. 15:32)! But there will indeed be a resurrection because Christ is raised from the dead!

Our final victory over physical death is a future event that will happen at the return of Jesus. At this time the "dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:52,53). Anyone who is alive at this time will undergo a bodily transformation to immortality. The scripture tells us, "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: 'Death is swallowed up in victory.' O Death, where

is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" (1 Cor 15:54-55)? Paul referred to this event as the redemption of our bodies saying, "but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope" (Rom. 8:23-24).

(Slide 12-13: The Kingdom of God)

2) *The Kingdom of God.* The appearing of the Kingdom of God is another basic about the future. Its appearing implies the return of Jesus Christ as King of Kings on earth. The kingdom of God is real, near us, and exists now, but it is outside of what we call the natural world; it is invisible. Those of us who know Jesus and the Holy Spirit have the kingdom of God within us, though we live on earth. Nevertheless, this kingdom and its King are yet to appear in what we call the visible or tangible world.

But before we continue, we should be sure that we understand what is meant in this book when the term "kingdom of God" is referred to. The modern understanding of the kingdom has been primarily mystical/heavenly. But the early Christians understood the kingdom in a more literal/earthly way. When we read about the kingdom of God and the kingdom of (from?) heaven in the Bible, it is almost always talking about a literal government that will appear on earth.

This is explained in more detail in Chapter One of *Preparing for the Government of God*. For the sake of convenience, a portion of that chapter is provided below.

In the original 1828 version of the *American Dictionary of the English Language*, Noah Webster provided eleven entries in his definition of the word *kingdom*. Probably the most common definition of *kingdom* in Christian circles coincides with Webster's second definition: "The inhabitants or population subject to a king." When a person becomes a Christian we say that person is now "in the Kingdom."

Webster's first definition of the word *kingdom* is: "The territory or country subject to a king; an undivided territory under the dominion of a king or monarch." It is similar to his eleventh entry which simply defines kingdom as: "Government; rule; supreme administration." I believe this is the primary understanding carried by Jesus and the early Christians when they talked about the Kingdom of God.

Kingdom is a political term. It is a form of government with a king as its sovereign ruler. Therefore, the Kingdom of God (or the Kingdom of Heaven) is a governmental order where the administration of all things is conducted according to the oversight and will of King Jesus.

Therefore, when Jesus taught us to pray to the Father, "Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven," what was He saying? He was teaching us to pray for the establishment of God's Kingdom rule on earth by which the whole world will come into subjection to Him. As Paul put it, Jesus will come and "subdue all things to himself" (Phil 3:21).

– *Preparing for the Government of God*, Page 15,16

The appearing of the Kingdom of God on earth, as it is in heaven, is the hope of all who understand and hold a biblical world view. It is what we are preparing for and working for if we

understand the strategy that God has laid out for us to accomplish. Keep this literal/earthly idea of the kingdom of God in mind as we continue.

(Slide 14: 3 Basics About The Future - Judgment)

3) *The Judgement.* Judgment has long been understood to be an inevitable future event. The last verses of the Old Testament speak of this judgment.

“For behold, the day is coming, Burning like an oven, And all the proud, yes, all who do wickedly will be stubble. And the day which is coming shall burn them up,” Says the LORD of hosts, “That will leave them neither root nor branch. ...Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.” — Malachi 4:1,5

Peter undoubtedly had this passage in mind when he wrote: “But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up”(2 Peter 3:10 NKJV).

And of course we have the book of Revelation. Though some of the book of Revelation is now fulfilled, it is indeed a book which provides a window into the future through which we can see the coming judgment of God on this world.

The Framework for Understanding the Future

(Slide 15: Framework of the Future)

Theologians have come up with several differing views of the future, each claiming to be the “biblical” one. But Jesus told one parable that seems to be a framework for understanding what is undoubtedly one of the most important events in our future—Jesus’ return and the appearing of His kingdom. This parable gives us a general framework for making plans in the present, how these plans relate to the future and what Christ’s return will be like. It is The Parable of Stewardship found in Luke Chapter 19 and Matthew Chapter 25. It also gives us insight concerning our present responsibilities as we anticipate His return.

However, the context of the parable (why Jesus told it) is also essential to keep in mind. Jesus told this parable “ *...because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately*” (Luke 19:11 NKJV). As He neared Jerusalem His disciples correctly understood at least three things: 1) Jesus was the Messiah who was promised, 2) He was going to establish His kingdom and rule the world and, 3) the Messiah would rule from His throne in Jerusalem. But because they were nearing Jerusalem, their assumption that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately was incorrect. Their timing was a bit off.

They would not understand until later that there was a mission to accomplish, a job to be done first. In hindsight, we now know that their job was to continue for at least 2000 years! This is why this parable is a critical framework upon which to begin building an understanding of the future and *when* Jesus and the Kingdom of God will appear. If you are not familiar with the parable of stewardship in Luke 19:11-27, I suggest you read it before continuing.

Without going into too much detail, the main points of this parable are listed below. There

are several other issues that can be addressed from the foundational understanding given in this parable. We will plug them in later.

(Slide 16: Framework of the Future)

- The Lord wanted His followers to know that He would leave for an extended period of time to receive a kingdom. This implies that there were preparations to be made before the kingdom would appear.
- Jesus has given us resources and responsibilities and expects us to be good stewards of His resources in His absence.
- These responsibilities include leadership in this world . We are to be his delegated authorities looking after His interests and promoting His will while he is gone. This is why the citizens of the country sent a letter protesting the nobleman's His rulership while He was gone.
- Our rewards and positions of authority in His kingdom when He returns will correspond to our stewardship of His resources in His absence.
- Those who resist God's stewards (and thus God) will be judged severely at His return.

This parable provides us a present framework for our view of the future. Presently we are to be doing business (God's business) with the resources He has given us. Jesus will return resurrecting the dead and granting resurrection life to those servants of His who are alive at that time. He will establish His Kingdom on earth and reward the faithful with positions of authority in His Kingdom. Then there will be judgment upon those who resist Him.

Now, having established this framework, we will begin adding more detail to understanding of the future.