



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Divine Purpose #32

“The Consummation of the Covenantal Program (3):

The Kingdom of God - I”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures. We thank Thee for the way in which they point to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who loved us and loosed us from our sins in his own precious blood. And we thank Thee that we are able to open the Bible in nineteen hundred and eighty-six and read of him and study concerning him and know that today he is alive and ministers at the right hand of the throne of God on behalf of the saints. We thank Thee for the hopes that we have and as we center our attention upon the consummation of the divine program with regard to the Kingdom of God and the purpose of the ages, that our minds may be enabled by the Holy Spirit to understand that we may profit from our studies. We give Thee thanks and praise for this time together and we pray that each of us may learn and then by Thy grace may be enabled to be submissive to Holy Scripture. We commit the hour to Thee. In Jesus' name and for his sake. Amen.

[Message] Well, if you have the outline, you can see that our topic for tonight is “The Consummation of the Covenantal Program,” and this is number three in that series, of which the one on “The Kingdom of God” is a part. But this is the first of our studies

on the Kingdom of God, when we finish this in two or three Sundays or two or three Wednesdays, we will conclude with “The New Heavens and the New Earth” and that will finish our study of the purpose of the ages, the covenants, and the nation Israel, particularly.

The passage that we’re looking at, particularly, is Revelation chapter 20, verse 1 through verse 6. And for those of you who were here last week, you’ll remember, that we looked at the Second Advent of our Lord as the second of our studies on the consummation of the covenantal program, and the passage that we had particularly in mind was Revelation chapter 19, verse 11 through verse 16.

Now, I don’t expect you to remember things like this, but when last week I introduced this subject, I made the comment that the Book of Revelation from chapter 19 through the end of the book, contains an unfolding of seven last things. And the Second Advent was the first of the last things, concerning which John received visions from the Lord.

We are skipping the second, which has to do with the struggle that occurred on the earth when our Lord reaches the earth. It’s described in verse 17 through verse 21 of chapter 19. So that’s why our outline begins in a few moments, after our introduction, with the third last thing.

Now, what we’re doing then is singling out some of these last things for special attention, as they bear on our general topic of the divine purpose of the ages. Now, first, a few words by way of introduction.

The dreams of utopia are common to mankind extending over history from Plato’s Republic, Augustine’s City of God, through Sir Thomas Moore’s Utopia, on to the satiric “Brave New World” of Aldus Huxley, who wrote that in nineteen hundred and thirty-two. The dreams, according to the Scriptures, shall come true in a staggeringly surprising way. There is an Atlantis. There is an El Dorado, to use terms associated with utopia. There are the Isles of the Blessed, in a word, the Golden Age, and the Golden Place of the

Kingdom of God upon the earth. And these things are found in the coming kingdom of the Messiah, who shall rule over the face of the earth.

A passage in the Old Testament, that describes his rule in a rather full way, is the 72nd Psalm, and so if you, in your notes, make a reference to Psalm 72 in verse 8 through verse 19, you can read some of the details of that kingdom. The passage that we have, above, as one of our study texts, Isaiah chapter 11, verse 1 through verse 16, is also a passage that, particularly, in the earlier part of the chapter pertains to that period of time, too.

Standing behind some of these ideas is the fact that the Kingdom of God is one of the great concepts of human existence. But, unfortunately, we in the twentieth century have tended to equate it with democracy or what is worth with socialism. In some circles, it's been equated with the Church. So when people use the term “The Kingdom of God,” one has to ask the question, what do you mean by “The Kingdom of God”? Do you mean socialism? Do you mean the arrival of socialism over the face of the earth? Is that “The Kingdom of God”? Surprisingly, there are people who use that expression and refer to something as far from it as that.

Others tend to equate it, I say, with democracy, and within the Church, a professing Church of our Lord, occasionally, you will hear, you will still hear people identifying the Kingdom of God with the Church.

Now, I say, standing behind some of these ideas is the view that the voice of the people is the voice of God. *Vox populi vox dei*, a very common expression that we all, probably, are familiar with, if we've done much reading; that's a very tragic illusion. In fact, the greater the number of people involved in government, the greater the evils that follow.

Tenney Frank, in his study of Roman imperialism, has shown that it was when the whole citizen body of Rome began to exercise power that Rome embarked on a policy of imperialist expansion. And so the more people involved in government, the less likely

we are to have the Golden Age. Universal peace has been and still is the rosy dream of the unregenerate and the rebellious, who little realize that it's their sin that prevents the achievement of peace on earth. One constantly reads this; and the politicians, particularly, like to use the expression of peace upon the earth, and everybody's looking for peace, not realizing that they, themselves, are the hindrances to the accomplishment of that.

Now, we cannot completely denigrate what democracy has gained, but we must remember that democracy is a reflection of the relations between individuals in the Kingdom of God, not between individuals and God. The relation between God and individuals, in the Kingdom of God, is not at all democratic. God is not the President, the chief representative of a gorgeous humanity. He's the Supreme Dictator in his kingdom, and his subjects are without any rights. He is king over a subordinate and dependent creation, who are equal with one another. Democracy then is an inverted attempt to realize mutual social equality, as a legislatively compulsive thing. It's an attempt to create artificially what is in the divine order of a spontaneous, un-purposed relationship.

Democracy on the earth is always only a laborious, clumsy objective. The Kingdom of God comes immediately and sovereignly, by the will of heaven, and from the beginning of the New Testament onward, the expectation of the Kingdom of God is part of the hope of the writers of the New Testament.

Just think for a moment? In Matthew chapter 5 in verse 5, in the Lord Jesus Christ's opening words, in that great sermon in chapter 5 in verse 5, we read these words, “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” Now, notice it's not, “they do inherit the earth.” “Blessed are the meek, for they 'shall' inherit the earth.” The Lord Jesus is not looking at something present then, when he gave them this sermon on the Mount. He's talking about the future. “Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.” In chapter 6 in verse 10, in the famous Lord's Prayer, which we have said is somewhat misnamed because not only did our Lord never use a prayer like this, but so

far as we know, the apostles never did. I don't have any objection to the principles unfolded within it. They are very instructive for us and we should remember that they are of that use for us. But this particular prayer was never intended to be repeated Sunday morning after Sunday morning. In fact, it's introduced in the Gospel of Matthew by words which say don't do it that way.

But in the 10th verse we read, “Let Thy kingdom come, let Thy will be done, as in heaven and upon the earth.” So when our Lord calls upon men to pray in accordance with this, after this manner, in this particular prayer there is an acknowledgement of the fact that the Kingdom of God is a future entity, not something present with them.

And then, of course, when we go over to passages like 1 Corinthians chapter 15 in verse 20 through verse 28, we don't have time to read them, the same kind of teaching flows forth from the Apostle Paul, so that it's clear that our Lord and the apostle were agreed on the teaching that the Kingdom of God was a future hope for believers.

Three questions are chiefly at issue, when we discuss the Kingdom of God. And, first of all, there is the coming of Christ. What's the relationship to the Kingdom of God on the earth? Does he come before that kingdom or does he come after that kingdom? Or is the kingdom present now?

The second question concerns the kingdom of Christ has it already come or do we still wait for it? It's my opinion that only the pre-millennial school does justice to both of these doctrines. That is, the coming of Christ and the kingdom of Christ. If we are not pre-millennial in our doctrine that doesn't mean we are not Christians. In fact, it's possible we may even be more submissive to the will of God and hold one of these doctrines than some who hold to the pre-millennial doctrine. We have many illustrations of that if we've lived in Christianity very long.

But pre-millennialism does justice to the coming of Christ; it does justice to the kingdom of Christ. In the case of post-millennialism, it does justice to the kingdom of

Christ, but the coming of Christ is largely lost in their emphasis upon bringing in the kingdom through the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

And, on the other hand, the amillennial scheme, that is, that there is no Kingdom of God upon the earth, justice is done to the coming of Christ. But since there is no Kingdom of God upon the earth, improper justice, in my opinion, is done to the kingdom of Christ. So one finds illustration of this, I think, in the writings of individuals who hold to these differing viewpoints.

For many years, I have read very carefully the “Reform Journal.” There are a number of other of that type of journal which are written by men who are very fine Christian men but who are, generally speaking, amillennial in their teaching. One of the outstanding men who is outstanding in that circle today in the Christian Reformed Church is Dr. Harry Boer. That’s B-O-E-R not B-O-R-E. Most of us who listen to doctors might say, well, that’s a classification and not a personal name, isn’t it? But, at any rate, his name is Dr. Boer. He’s a Dutchman. He has been a missionary in Africa and a teacher in a theological seminary for many years in Africa, now back in this country. But Dr. Boer wrote a series of articles in the Reform Journal on Reform ministry and the millennium. And I read him with a great deal of interest because I was interested in what he was going to say about the millennium, since he didn’t believe in the millennium, in the sense in which that term is ordinarily defined.

His concept of the millennium is the period of time from 1st Coming to the 2nd Coming, and for him it is largely a heavenly kingdom rather than an earthly kingdom. And so Dr. Boer went on to write that it was a rather peculiar thing that the people who believed that the millennium was the present time, that is, that the Kingdom of God was in force at the present time, such as he did, never did any talking about it. While those who felt that the millennium was something in the future were doing all of the talking about it. I thought that was rather interesting that a person who believed that admitted

that the people with whom he was acquainted, and he’s a very knowledgeable man, did not really preach on the doctrine of the millennium.

As a matter of fact, he said when we teach the Book of Revelation, we generally unfold the teaching of the first chapter and then the second and third chapters, where the Lord Jesus speaks to the churches, and then we say, “Next week, we’ll give a series of messages on Job, chapters 1 and 2.” Those were his words.

And, I remember, that when I was a student at the University of Edinburgh, a number of years ago, the man under whom I studied was Dr. James Stewart, a very fine New Testament man and outstanding Scottish preacher. In fact, he was the Queen’s preacher in Scotland. And Dr. Stewart announced that he was going to give a series of messages, a series of exegetical lectures on the Book of Revelation, and so, I was very careful to go to it because I wanted to hear what he had to say on the book. And that is just about what he did for the whole semester. They had three semesters at the university, in those days, but this is one of the long ones. For the whole semester, he spent his lectures on the first three chapters of the book. So we never got any exegesis of anything that had to do with the prophetic portions of the book. That was a great disappointment. I was interested in what he was going to say. But he did say this in the course of his lectures on the first three chapters. He stopped there. But he said, “John was a millennialist. However, I’m not.” Those were his words. John is a millennialist. It’s obvious that he believes in that, but I do not.

I thought that was rather revealing that that would be his opinion. How many of you, this is a rhetorical question, how many of you have ever been to an Amillennial Prophecy Conference? Well, the chances are that most of you never have. But you’ve probably been to other conferences, in which fine amillennial speakers have spoken. But generally speaking, amillennialists do not like to talk about biblical prophecy. Why? I’m not going to try to unfold all that may be in their minds.

But now, let's turn to our subject, and we're looking at the third last thing, and we're going to concentrate our attention on what is meant by the binding of Satan; Revelation chapter 20, verse 1 through verse 3.

Now, you can see from the outline that in verse 1 and verse 2, we have the act of Satan's binding. In the first part of verse 3, we have the purpose of Satan's binding and then in the last clause of verse 3, the necessity of Satan's release. And I'm going to read this, I'm reading from the Greek text and so that's probably why you will notice that your text does not quite agree with what I am saying.

“And I saw an angel descending out of heaven, having the keys of the abyss [or the key of the abyss] and a great chain upon his hand. And he seized the dragon [the ancient serpent], who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. And he cast him into the abyss, and he shut it, and he sealed above it [or set his seal over him], in order that he should not any longer deceive the nations, until the thousand years shall be finished.”

For those of you who know Greek, some of you do, you'll notice I'm rendering that particular verb as a future, and the reason for it is found in your Greek grammars.

“Until the thousand years shall be finished [We could render it simply are finished.] after these things, it is necessary for him to be loosed for a little time.” [A little season, it has often been rendered.]

Well, now, let's turn then to verse 1 of Revelation 20. One of the outstanding commentators on Revelation has said, “We come now to a passage which more than any other in the book has been the paradise of cranks and fanatics on the one hand, and literalists on the other.”

There's a possible illustration of this. One of my students, former pupils, at theological seminary, began his exposition of the chapter with the comment, “Now, the most sensational arrest in history takes place. More sensational than that of John Dillinger or Babyface Floyd,” and, of course, now, since you can tell from those men that he singles out, this was said about twenty-five years ago, now, we could add Lee Harvey Oswald, Sirhan Sirhan, James Earl Carter, I mean , James Earl Ray [Laughter] and Adolf Eichman to the list.

The argument, however, flows very naturally from chapter 19 to chapter 20. And I want you to notice that because, later on, when we discuss the interpretation of verses 4 through 6, this will loom rather large. The reason for it is this; that some people believe that the Book of Revelation is arranged in a recapitulating kind of way. That is, that the visions begin and move to the Second Advent of our Lord; and then, in the unfolding of the revelation, John begins, again, with the first coming, moves to the second coming and, in fact, according to the recapitulation interpretation of this book, he does that seven times in the book.

Now, one of the reasons why that is a happy solution for some is because you can see that in chapter 19, we've had the Second Advent of Christ, we've had the final battle upon the earth in which the beast and the false prophet have been taken care of, and now, if we're going to talk about a kingdom of a thousand years, it's clear that this kingdom follows the Second Advent. And so if you have the view that the kingdom is present, well then, obviously, the order of the unfolding of the visions in the Book of Revelation is contrary to that. But if you can presume that John begins again at the first coming, with chapter 20 in verse 1, and in the binding of Satan begins again with that first advent, and then moves on to the Second Advent, again, then that would allow these opening verses here to refer to the binding of Satan, which is suppose to have taken place when Christ died on the cross at Calvary. But what I want you to notice is the fact that

we have here a very careful continuation of the thought of chapter 19, as we move into chapter 20.

Two members of the Infernal Trinity have just been dealt with; the beast and the false prophet. You'll notice, verse 20, where John writes, “And the beast, and with him the false prophet, who performed the signs before him, was seized.” And then we read in chapter 20, “And I saw an angel descending out of heaven, having the key to the abyss, and he laid hold of the dragon.”

Now, you're reading through the Book of Revelation, you will see that these three individuals form what has often been called the Infernal Trinity; the beast, the false prophet, and the dragon, each one of them corresponding to the persons who make up the Eternal Trinity. So since two of these three have just been dealt with, how natural it is for the flow of thought now to deal with the destiny of the dragon, who is the most important member of that particular trinity.

There is no peace or piety if he is at large, as one of the commentators has said. He's been cast out of heaven that's a reference to chapter 12. Now, he must be cast out of the earth. There are no specific temporal explanations of the time when the event of verses 1 through 3 takes place.

But now, I want you to notice the use of the expression, “And I saw.”

Thank you, Roy. I think I was hurting the ears of those who are sitting in the audience. Chapter 19 in verse 11. Now remember, these are visions that John receives. Verse 11 of chapter 19 says, “And I saw heaven opened.” Verse 17, “And I saw an angel standing in the sun.” Verse 19, “And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war with the one sitting upon the horse, and with his army.” A reference to our Lord, there.” Chapter 20, verse 1, “And I saw an angel descending out of heaven.” Verse 4, “And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them.” Chapter 20 in verse 11, “And I saw a great white throne, and the one sitting upon it.” Chapter 21, verse 1, “And I saw a new heavens and a new earth.”

Now, I think, you can see that what we have here is a series of visions, one following right after the other. There's no reason for us to stop at the end of chapter 19, and start over again, when John is unfolding vision after vision. In other words, the natural reading of chapter 20, verse 1 through verse 3, is that the events described here are events that follow the Second Advent of our Lord. And since the teaching of chapter 20, verse 4 through verse 6, has to do with the Kingdom of God upon the earth, it would appear plain then that the kingdom is a Kingdom of God that follows the Second Advent of the Lord Jesus, and will be held upon the earth.

Now, one might say and wisely say this, I think, he might say at this point, well, John is giving us certain visions that he has received. But how do we know that the events that the visions describe are events that are chronological in order? It's a very good question and one that sooner or later you would think about, if you haven't already thought about it. Because, after all, all John is doing is giving us visions that were given to him. Well if you will notice chapter 20 in verse 7, you will see that in John's understanding of these things and he received them from the Lord, there is chronological progression because we read, after the description of the kingdom and the vision there in verses 4 through 6, he says, “And when the thousand years shall be finished, Satan shall be loosed from his prison.”

In other words, within the vision, there is, within the visions, there is chronological progression. And further to confirm that is the fact that in verses 7 through 10, after the unfolding of the vision of the kingdom in verses 4 through 6, the beast and the false prophet are still in the lake that is described at the end of chapter 19. So we have reason, then, to believe that what John is doing is giving us a series of visions that do follow after one another in chronological fashion. That is, the events of the visions do.

The theory of recapitulation, therefore, has the burden of proof, what we call the *onus probandi*, the burden of proof, to show that the events of chapter 20, start again with the first coming of our Lord, rather than continue in chronological fashion. It's very

important for the amillennial interpretation of Revelation 20. If they cannot show that then as one of them has said, the progression of visions with the same introductory formula is one of the good features of pre-millennialism. And it surely is.

Now, we say, the third member of the trinity is reserved for special treatment. One might ask the question, why is the dragon reserved for special treatment? For all that is said of the two, the beast and the false prophet, is that they were taken and they were cast into the lake of fire that burns with brimstone. But now, we have these three verses that are devoted to the dragon. Well, the simplest answer is since then seems to have originated with Satan, he has special responsibility, and, therefore, there is special interest in his destiny.

So he is cast into the abyss. The abyss was considered to be a vast subterranean cavern, which served as a place of confinement for disobedient spirits awaiting judgment. And, incidentally, you'll find references to the abyss outside of the Bible. That was a common expression. One finds it in books like Enoch, Jubilees, and so on. Fallen angels, in some of that literature, are bound hand and foot and cast into the abyss. That it's "narrow and deep and horrible and dark," is one of the descriptions that is given of the abyss. I remember when I was reading the Latin, as a high school student, some of the things that we had to read, like the Sibylline Oracles, had sections in them that dealt with things like this, before I had made profession of faith, though I was a Presbyterian, and I, when I first became converted and began to read Scripture, I noticed that some of those things found in those oracles were things that were related to the Scriptural literature and to some of the pseudo-biblical literature, as well.

The relation between the abyss and the lake of fire, well, we don't have anything in the Bible that tells us specifically what it is. Perhaps it's the same kind of relationship that the county jail has to the state penitentiary. That is, accused criminals may be kept or detained before trial, after sentencing they are sent off to the state penitentiary, where they serve their term of punishment.

Obviously, the term is a symbolic one, although a real confinement is indicated. The word “upon his hand” concerning the chain, means resting upon or hanging upon, as a chain naturally would. Sometimes people say, well, is that a literal chain? Is it possible for the dragon to be held by a literal chain? Well, of course, it’s not the kind of chain that you and I think of when we think of a chain. We think of an iron chain. But this is the kind of chain that is able to hold a dragon. This is symbolic language, but it depicts a reality, and that’s the important thing.

If one looks at passages like 2 Peter 2:4, and Jude 6, I think, you will see that what is referred to is a symbolic expression that refers to a real confinement, but not an iron chain. Not every chain is iron and, in this case, that is undoubtedly the case. There is considerable irony in this event, which we ought not to miss. John writes, “I saw an angel.” There is no article in the original text. “I saw an angel descending out of heaven, having the key of the abyss, and a great chain hanging upon his hand.” Now, how did Satan begin? Well, Satan began as Lucifer. As a matter of fact, from all of the revelation we have in the Bible, Satan began as the chief of the angelic hosts. And if we can believe some intimations that are found in the Old Testament, and some incidental comments in the New Testament, he fell from his exalted position. The details of it, we don’t have to argue. And, in fact, they are somewhat illusory. But, nevertheless, it seems fairly plain, he was the head of the angelic host at one time.

But now, the irony that “an angel” should come out and arrest Lucifer, the head of the angelic host at one time, it must be excruciatingly painful for him to contemplate this time; the person who was once Lucifer, the son of the morning.

In verse 2, the angel takes the dragon into custody and this word “and he seized the dragon” points to an action as an event. It has that force. It is the word that is used of our Lord’s arrest, in the Gospels.

But notice the way Satan is described; he’s called the dragon, he’s called the old serpent, a reference to his activity in the Garden of Eden, he is called the slanderer or the

Devil, for that’s the meaning of the term devil, and he’s called *santanas*, or the resister, for he resists the will of God. All of these terms are terms that are given to him in the Book of Revelation. So we have these terms piled up, one on top of the other, to point out the character of Satan.

But now, let’s come to our major point tonight, and that’s the meaning of the binding of Satan. This is a rather hotly disputed point. And, I think, it’s important for us to grasp. It’s crucial to the question of an earthly reign of our Lord.

Now, here are the competing views, I’m not going to talk about all of them, and there are some little differences of interpretation, but basically two different views are held.

One: That the binding of Satan refers to our Lord’s work on the Cross, when he shed his blood and made it possible for men to be saved through his atoning work. Men, such as William Hendrickson, a well known Christian Reform commentator, and particularly Anthony A. Hoekema. Professor Hoekema is a man whom I admire very much, he has written some very, very significant works. He’s a very fine Christian man, an excellent theologian. He has just written a book on man and his nature, his fall, his sin. I just bought it the other day. It’s just out. Haven’t had a chance to read it yet but I’m sure it’s a good book.

One of his most important books is *The Bible in the Future*. And to my mind, one of the sad things in our theological seminaries today is that books that are written by competing, men who compete, in viewpoint are never read by the other side. I have spoken to a series of men who have taught eschatology in pre-millennial schools. I’ve made it a little habit, over the Professor Hoekema’s book, *The Bible and the Future*, has been out about six years. And I’ve asked these men, “Have you read Anthony Hoekema’s *The Bible and the Future?*” Almost invariably, “No, I really haven’t. I’ve seen some references to it, but I haven’t read it.”

How can you defend your viewpoint if you don't know the viewpoint of the individual who has the strongest objections to your own viewpoint? I never have figured out how we gain anything by not looking at the best presentation of an opposing viewpoint. I think, one of the best things you will discover, is that you realize that some of these conflicts that occur within Christianity, are conflicts in which on both sides of questions there are certain things that can be said in favor of opposing viewpoints. And, I think, it should lead us to be a little bit more accommodating to our friends within the Church of Jesus Christ, who may differ with us in our eschatological viewpoint. And even in our viewpoint concerning the nature of divine grace.

So Professor Hendrickson, well, he was a professor at one time, but William Hendrickson has written a number of commentaries. He's now with the Lord. And, of course, I hope he's on our side now. But Dr. Hendrickson was a very daunting defender of the amillennial viewpoint, and Professor Hoekema is one who has followed in his steps and has taken the defense of it a little farther along the way. Both of these men take the binding of Satan, here, in a limited way. The influence of the devil, they say, is curtailed, so that he is unable to prevent the extension of the church, through an active missionary program.

Now, notice the wording of our text in verse 3, “And cast him into the abyss, and shut and sealed it above him, in order that he should not deceive any longer the Gentiles, or the nations.” So their view is that Satan is bound in the sense that he is unable to prevent the extension of the church through an active missionary program. In other words, he's unable to deceive the nations. But he has other great freedom.

Hendrickson links this event with the Cross; as the term and significance of the binding. And I'd like for you to turn to Matthew, well, let's turn to Mark chapter 3, verse 26 and verse 27, for sake of time. Mark chapter 3, verse 26 and verse 27, is a text found in the context of our Lord's healing ministry and exorcizing ministry. And in Mark 3:26, we read, and our Lord is speaking, “And if Satan rise up against himself, and is divided,

he cannot stand, but he has an end. But no one can enter into the house of the strong man, to plunder his vessels, except first he bind the strong man and then he shall destroy his house.” Shatter his house. So the binding of Satan, according to this view, is our Lord’s work on the Cross. And by virtue of what he did on the Cross, Satan has been bound. The evil one is still active in many ways, but he no longer deceives the nations. And, therefore, the Church is today conquering the nations. That’s the viewpoint of Professor Hoekema, that’s the viewpoint of William Hendrickson and others.

Even George Ladd, a pre-millennial interpreter for many years, professor of New Testament at Fuller Seminary, points out that the binding does not mean complete immobility. Although, he sees a different result from it than Hendrickson and Hoekema, he sees it as preventing satanic persecution of the saints during the time.

I’d like to suggest some difficulties with this view; that when we read here the “binding of Satan” that we are to understand this as our Lord’s atoning work on the Cross. First of all, the vision sets forth some elaborate measures taken to insure the custody of the dragon. And, I suggest, that they are most easily understood as implying the complete cessation of his influence on earth; rather than a curbing of his activities. The abyss is sealed, as a special precaution against escape. So I just suggest, first, that the way in which his binding suggests a more complete curtailment of Satan’s influence than, simply, deception of the nations.

In the second place, the parable in Mark 3:26 and 27, that our Lord is speaking about in the context of his exorcisms, refers to his exorcisms in the immediate context or to his power over individuals because of personal sin, while here, we are dealing with nations. In other words, Mark 3, doesn’t have anything to do with the deception of the nations. It had to do with our Lord’s power over individuals who were under the sway of demonic powers and spirits.

Thirdly, there are certain passages in the New Testament that one might appeal to, and in support of Professor Hoekema’s viewpoint, such as Luke 22:3, Acts chapter 5, verse

3, Acts chapter 11, verse 14, we don't have time to look at all of them. And even 1 Peter chapter 5, verse 18, that's a text, incidentally, that I'm sure you're familiar with, but I'll read it again. 1 Peter 5 in verse, let's see, that's probably a mistake, where we read, “Be sober. Watch for your adversary, the Devil, as a roaring lion walks about seeking whom he may devour.” That's verse 8, and not verse 18. 1 Peter chapter 5 in verse 8.

Now, one might say that you can handle all of these texts and still support the idea that all that Satan is doing is, today, is deceiving the nations. Or, rather, that he's not deceiving the nations, I should say, and the Church is conquering the nations through the preaching of the Gospel.

But now, turn over to 2 Corinthians chapter 4, verses 3 and 4. In this passage, the Apostle Paul is speaking about the blinding of individuals. And he says in 2 Corinthians 4:3 and 4, “Now if our gospel has been hidden, it has been hidden in the ones who are perishing. In whom the god of this age,” now, notice, the god of this age is not a reference to God the Father. The god of this age is a reference to Satan. “In whom the god of this age hath blinded the thoughts of the unbelieving, so that they do not see the” or, “in order that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ should not shine unto them.” Christ, who is the image of God.

In other words, the very activity that Professor Hoekema and Professor Hendrickson say is something that Satan does not do now, deceive individuals, is what Paul says he is doing at the present time. So it appears to me that this text clearly suggests that Satan is deceiving people today.

In the fourth place, if the binding is the result of the finished work of Christ on the Cross, can this deception take place again, after the completion of the thousand years? Now, notice what we read in verses 7 and 8 of Revelation 20. In verses 7 and 8, after the description of the vision of the kingdom, we read this, “And when the thousand years shall be finished, Satan shall be loosed from his prison. He shall go out to deceive the nations.”

Now, let me ask you a question. You know, occasionally, you’ll have people say, mind you, I don’t hold to these views but many of my friends hold the views that passages in Ezekiel chapters 40 through 48, in which reference is made to what appears to them to be a restoration of the Levitical scheme of things, sacrifices offered, even reference is made to the forgiveness of sins in those chapters.

And many of my good friends, who hold the same pre-millennial viewpoint that I do, take the view that those are memorial sacrifices. That’s a very difficult interpretation to take, for several reasons. First of all, forgiveness of sins is set forth and they do not seem to be merely memorial. If you read those chapters. And, furthermore, it suggests going back to the Levitical economy when it’s plain our Lord died and the veil of the Temple was rent in twain from top to bottom, signifying the doing away of the Levitical economy, with the priesthood and sacrifices that characterized it.

So if in the future, in the time of the age of the Kingdom of God upon the earth, men are again offering sacrifices that poses a serious problem. And, usually, the objection raised is, if Christ accomplished a finished work, how can we have sacrifices again? And offerings? Does not the Epistle to the Hebrews plainly say that the work of our Lord is a finished work? And the sacrificial system has been done away with? I agree with that. I think that’s true.

There are better explanations of Ezekiel 40 through 48. But then, my friends on the other side of the isle who are Amillennialists, who like to use that objection, are they not guilty of the same thing? What they are saying is that Christ died and bound Satan by his work on the Cross. But there is coming a time, in the future, when Satan is not going to be bound.

In other words, the same finished work turns out to be unfinished in the future, because Satan is now able to do what they say he cannot do now because Christ died on the Cross. Doesn’t take much reasoning to see that they’ve fallen into the same kind of trap. So if Satan is bound now, then we can only say that he has a very long chain.

Incidentally, if the thousand-year-period is concurrent with the thousand-year-reign of the martyrs and others, that we'll talk about next week, and if the reign is yet future then the binding is future. And if the binding refers to an earthly binding, it seems to do so clearly in the context here, then the thousand year reign refers to an earthly reign, it would seem.

So, therefore, since our Lord's victory over Satan at the Cross was a once-for-all victory, the event here cannot refer to the Cross. It refers to a future incarceration of the dragon, lasting for one thousand years while the over comers are reigning upon the earth.

There is an interesting point made by one of the outstanding commentators on the Book of Revelation here that, I think, maybe I'll have time to say just a word about. He makes this comment. And, incidentally, he's not a pre-millennialist. In fact, I doubt that if I were to say to Professor Cared , he's no longer with us either, he died a year or two ago , if I were to say to professor Cared, “What do you think about pre-millennialism and amillennialism?” he would say, “I don't bother with that kind of controversy. It doesn't really have any significance for me.” So he's not a pre-millennialist arguing for a pre-millennial viewpoint.

But he says this about the prevention of deception for a thousand years. He says, “This plainly implies that throughout the thousand years there will be a considerable world population which would otherwise be susceptible to the attacks of Satan. And, therefore, a population over and above the conqueror's who proved themselves impervious to these attacks.” He means the saints. “This impression is immediately confirmed by the twice repeated statement that the conquerors are to reign with Christ, since it would be a singularly empty recognition of their services if they were to reign over a world with which they were the soul inhabitants.” So the very fact that we have a rule and a reign here suggests that there are people who are being ruled over, who are not of the same spiritual status of those who are doing the reigning. He goes on to say more about it, but for the sake of time I won't read the rest of it.

There is an interesting point in the last part of verse 3, that I would to deal with. And on the outline, it's the purpose of the thousand years. Sometimes people will say this to me, in fact, not long ago in the office of Believers Chapel here, I walked in and one of the people in the office, I've forgotten who it is, who was sitting there said, “Why is there any millennium? It doesn't seem an essential in the program of God that there should be a Kingdom of God upon the earth?”

Quite a few people have raised that objection to the teaching that there will be a Kingdom of God upon the earth. What's the point of it? Why do we have to have a kingdom? Let me give you some suggestions that have been offered, and I'll, you'll tell by my emphasis which one, I think, has a little bit more merit.

It has been suggested that during the millennium, Christ will openly manifest his kingdom in world history. The millennium will provide an actual demonstration of the truthfulness of the divine witness borne by Christ and his followers, during their life on earth. It will be a time of the fulfillment of all God's covenant promises to his people. So the Kingdom of God upon the earth will serve the purpose of the demonstration of the fulfillment of those promises that we've looked at, now, for about eight months; the Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenant promises.

Second, the millennium will reveal that man's rebellion against God lies deep in man's own heart; not in the devil's deception and that even during the time of our Lord's personal reign upon the earth, there are men who are in rebellion against him. Even when Satan is bound and righteousness prevails in the world, some people are still rebellious against the Lord God. And the final release of Satan will openly draw out this hidden evil of the human heart. It's just another way of showing us how wicked the human heart really is.

That's one of the great lessons of Christianity. In fact, you know, there are people who tell us that, “If you do not know that you're a sinner, you cannot be saved.” And that's very true! No one wants to be saved who doesn't realize how much of a sinner he

is. Well, let me tell you this, over and over again, I have Christians say to me, “I knew I was a sinner. I understood that I was a sinner. But since I’ve become a Christian, I’ve really come to understand how sinful I am.” And let me also assure you, from my experience and from the testimony of most of my friends, that the Christian life is characterized by growth in the knowledge of human sinfulness. And it’s something that we will have to deal with until we enter into the presence of the Lord. There is no such thing as complete victory over sin today. And once you think that you’ve proved my point.

Third, the release of Satan after the millennium shows the invulnerability of the city of God and the extent of the authority of Christ, since the Devil is immediately defeated and cast into the lake of fire.

One of my former students, who is professor and chairman of the department of religion and philosophy at Wheaton College, has offered this as a reason. “The millennium will serve as a long period required to do the general house cleaning needed after the preceding ages of sin, during which sin was prevalent.” He didn’t elaborate on that so I don’t know what he means by “general housekeeping.”

One might add another answer to it, and, I think, that this means something a bit more significant than some of the others. It’s a clear indication of the fulfillment of our Lord’s completed redemptive work within history. Just as the fall took place on the earth within history and affected both man and the creation, which was linked with man. Remember, man fell and with him, judgment was pronounced not simply upon Adam and Eve, but upon the creation itself, being linked with Adam and his fall. So in the kingdom, it will be seen that not only has man been redeemed by the work of the Son, but also the creation has had its curse lifted and participates in the glory of the accomplishment of the Lord Jesus Christ.

So to my mind, the kingdom is a necessary event, to demonstrate to the glory of Jesus Christ, the effects of his saving work, not simply upon the individuals who come to

be the children of God through faith in him and the blood that was shed, but, also, in the cosmic significance of the Lord's saving work. It touches this whole creation, as we've been talking about in the exposition of Colossians over the past two or three months. Our Lord is a cosmic savior, as well as a personal savior. And his work extends to the whole of the creation. Therefore, I think, the Kingdom of God upon the earth has great significance for the divine program of the ages.

So now, next week, since our time is up, we're going to look at the fourth, last thing; the kingdom of the Messiah, and we're going to deal with a number of interesting questions and I'll try to answer, again, Professor Hoekema who has written a rather interesting exposition of verses 4 through 6, seeking to uphold his own particular approach to the question.

Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the word of God and for the way in which our Lord Jesus Christ's saving work is magnified in it. We thank Thee that he is not only our personal savior, but a cosmic savior as well. We look forward to the completion of the work that he's accomplished, and not simply in the Kingdom of God upon the earth, but in the new heavens and the new earth, all won by the blood that was shed on Calvary's Cross. How blessed we are! We give Thee thanks and praise for him who loved us and loosed us from our sins, in his own precious blood. And, Lord, how could we ever thank Thee sufficiently for the eternal love that Thou hast shown to us, the saints, through Christ? Accept our thanks.

In His name. Amen.