



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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

Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Divine Purpose #36

“The Consummation of the Covenantal Program (7):

The Nature of the Eternal State”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Our heavenly Father, we approach Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we thank Thee and praise Thee for the access that we enjoy by the virtue of the fact that he stands for us as our mediator. We are grateful. We give Thee thanks and praise for the wisdom and the grace manifested in the divine plan of salvation; in fact, the divine plan for this universe, and we worship Thee: Triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We give Thee thanks for the privilege of the study of the Scriptures and, Lord, we ask that as we study this evening that the Holy Spirit, again, may guide us in our thoughts and as we ponder some of the things of the word of God, introduce us to a further knowledge of the truth of God and may it have its practical significance in our daily lives. We thank Thee for each one present here and we pray Thy blessing upon them and upon their families and bless their ministry, too, in a place in which Thou hast put them, for the glorification of Thy name. Now, we ask for the special sense of the presence of the Holy Spirit, in his working in our minds and in our hearts. We want to give Thee praise and glory for all that is due unto Thy wonderful name. We acknowledge, Lord, our complete dependence upon Thee, for instruction and for the kind of life that may be pleasing to Thee, and we pray.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

[Message] Well, tonight, we've come to the end of our long series of messages, which has had to do with the subject of The Divine Purpose of the Ages; and I know that you and in one sense I too am happy to be able to come to the end of it, because it's been about thirty-five lectures over the past year in which we've sought to deal with this particular topic. The topic for tonight is “The Consummation of the Covenantal Program” this is number 7, and it's “The Nature of the Eternal State.” You have, I hope, an outline before you; and I will be following along in it in general and will hope, here and there, to add some things that might be useful.

One of the things that can be said immediately about the eternal state or heaven, which is the popular name for that is that we know of heaven, but we know very little about heaven. Twenty-five years ago, when I was studying in Scotland, one of the Bible teachers in one of the conferences in which I was engaged, said this. I wrote it down because I thought at the time that it was very significant and, also, quite true. He said, “Our hymnbooks tell us more about heaven than our Bibles.” And, in a sense that's true, because in our hymnbooks, we have expressions of thanksgiving and we have aspirations. And, in our aspirations, there is also a bit of spiritual imagination, too. And many of the things that are found in our hymnbooks are not specifically found in Scripture; but represent inferences that godly and spiritual people have sought to draw from the facts of Holy Scripture.

Many of the ideas that we have about heaven or about the eternal state are wrong and one can read the popular literature and, also, the literature we call our daily newspapers and other types of periodicals and find many things about heaven and about life beyond this life, that are not really true to the Bible at all. When we say that we know of heaven, but we know very little about heaven, what we are trying to say is that really, when we think about heaven we are thinking about something that is beyond our

understanding, because it's not found in the word of God. And, in fact, that kind of life that we enjoy there is a kind of life of which, with which we are not acquainted. And we are not equipped to understand what it must be.

In January, when I was in the Netherlands, I took out of the library a book by Ernest Stoeffler entitled “German Pietism during the 18th Century.” It's a very scholarly work and I enjoyed reading through it, particularly, because of some of the 18th Century spiritual men and scholars as well who had been important in biblical teaching. For example, Johann Albrecht Bengel was one of the men that Stoeffler wrote considerably about and others as well. But another man of whom he wrote quite a bit was Count Von Zinzendorf. And Von Zinzendorf had a view of heaven that is really pretty true; but he went on to express it concerning God's being in this way. He often said that one cannot presume to penetrate rationally the problem of God's being. “Such an attempt,” Zinzendorf said, “could be compared with the effort of a mouse in the basement of a castle to reason with another mouse about the architecture of such a structure.” Well, for us to think about heaven is certainly similar to that. Just like a couple of mice or maybe a handful of mice who want to talk about something such as one of those giant castles and the principles of architecture that are found in it.

So with Erick Sowerden, I confess that we bow before the infinite and we acknowledge our ignorance, so far as heaven, itself, is concerned. I'm looking forward to it. I'm looking forward to the surprise and also to the enjoyment of it. And I know one thing; it's going to be better than Texas. And that's an encouragement to say the least.
[Laughter]

What we know of the eternal state is largely, although not entirely, found in Revelation chapter 21 and 22. Now, we don't have time to give an exposition of this chapter, and if you are interested, you can go to the tape ministry and find expositions not simply by me but by others of portions of Revelation chapter 21 and chapter 22. And even that would by no means be even more than a survey of what is found in these

chapters because if we were to look at the original text and expound them, there would be just that much more that could be said. I know, from experience, because I used to do that every two years expound Revelation 21 and 22 from the original text.

But we're going to look at it, just simply in the light of our series of studies; that is, the purpose of the ages. And so we'll concentrate on the interpretation of the statement with which the Apostle John begins Revelation chapter 21. So if you have your Bibles, we'll turn there and I will read a few verses and then we'll take a look at, first, in our outline: The new heavens and the new earth, the content of the vision.

But let me read these verses. Here the Apostle John writes.

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

That's certainly a lovely metaphor for the figure of a bride adorned for her husband. We all, who have ever attended a wedding, know precisely what that is. I always, even standing in this church, looking and watching brides come down the aisle, and all eyes, generally, upon the bride, because we want to see her in her finest attire and in her finest appearance. So that's a lovely metaphor.

“Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.’”

Now, you know, if you read the Bible, and if you read it carefully, and if you read it from the standpoint that we've been trying to expound it, that is, from the standpoint of

the divine covenants, the eternal theological covenant as well as the historical development in the historical covenants, the characteristic expression of covenantal relationship is found right here. “They shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” You know the expression in the Old Testament, it begins as early as the 12th chapter of Genesis, that “They shall be to me for a people; I will be to them for a God.” That’s the covenantal, really, the heart of the covenantal relationship that the Bible develops and expands, and, finally, reaches its fruition in the New Testament salvation. So there is a reference to it there, as a consummation of the work of God.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, ‘Behold, I make all things new.’ And he said unto me, ‘Write: for these words are true and faithful.’ And he said unto me, ‘It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is a thirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son. [Again, a covenantal affirmation.] But the fearful and unbelieving and the abominable and murderers and whoremongers and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death.”

So the new heavens and the new earth and this is Revelation 21:1 through 8, that I’ve just read and a simple summary of the content of this vision. To put it very briefly, and simply, what John sees is a fresh creation and its magnificent metropolis. In fact, when John uses the term “new heaven” he uses the Greek adjective, which means “fresh” rather than recent. So the stress rests upon the freshness, the newness in the sense of freshness, not recentness of the heaven and the earth that are to be; and following this are

voices from the throne in verse 3 and verse 4, and from the one on the throne in verse 5 through verse 8.

One comment, concerning the 3rd verse, the last part of it, “And they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.” There is a textual problem here. And the manuscripts differ, however, the text that is most commonly used by New Testament scholars today, as illustrated by the Bible Society’s edition, which I have here, has a variant in its text. That is, the authors prefer it. And the variant is a variant that has a very interesting rendering that may be put to it; and many outstanding New Testament scholars, such as C. H. Dodd, and others, have expressed their view that this is probably the way this text should be read. And I’d like for you to notice it because it’s rather interesting even though we cannot be absolutely certain that this is the correct reading, that is, that this is precisely what John wrote.

The last clause says, now, I’m reading it in the version that I read for you. It’s “God himself shall be with them and be their God.” But I’m going to read the Greek text, as I have it here before me. It, too, can be read in two ways, but I’m going to read it that, generally speaking, scholarship today thinks may well be the point. “And God himself with them shall be their God.” “God himself with them shall be their God.”

Now, what is striking about that is this: you know, the name that is given in the first of our Gospels, the Book of Matthew, the first chapter, the name that the Lord Jesus is said to bear, is the name Emmanuel. Now, Emmanuel or Emmanouel is the combination of the word for God in the Old Testament and a preposition with a pronoun suffix, first person plural, with us is God. But strikingly that is a term never applied to the Lord Jesus in the New Testament. “His name shall be called Emmanuel.” Where is he ever called Emmanuel? Never called Emmanuel. Isn’t that strange?

You never find anyone in the New Testament saying of the Lord Jesus or to him, Emmanuel. Of course, one might argue, on every page of the New Testament, where the Lord Jesus is referred, one can find some indication that he is God with us. But he is

never called that. I think, it's striking that right here, in the last vision of the New Testament, we read in this particular variant reading, “And God himself with them.” Emmanuel, “shall be their God.” So right at the end of the New Testament, we have a confession of the fact, again, that the Lord Jesus is truly their God. Now, that's just simply an aside; it's not really all that important for the flow of thought here, but I thought it rather interesting to note.

After the voices from the throne in verses 3 and 4, there are voices from the one on the throne in verses 5 through verse 8. And the point of these expressions is the elucidation of the new creation, encouraging the saved by promises of, for example, in the 4th verse, no more death and admonishing the unsaved with threats of no more life in verse 8. The description of the scene of the new heaven, the new earth, the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from heaven, suggests a literal city.

Now, when we say, of course, suggests a literal city, we don't mean that it's a city expressed or described in starkly literal terms because it's obvious this city is described in symbolic terms. And one reading not only the description of the city but the description of the conditions of life in the city, will immediately see that these visions are visions in which there is a rich and full use of symbolism and symbolism drawn from the pages of Scripture. But the fact that symbolism is used does not, in any way, violate the affirmation; this is a literal city.

Now, Tom Raye is not here tonight; I don't know what he is doing. He's preparing probably, mentally, for the game on Saturday afternoon when Alabama plays University of Tennessee in one of the big games of the year. But if we should read Sunday morning in our newspapers Crimson Tide swallows volunteers; all of us who follow the sports pages, this time of year, will know immediately that the Crimson Tide defeated the University of Tennessee this Saturday afternoon in a football game. The fact that the symbolism is used or these figurative expressions are used, does not in any way suggest that we do not have literal events or a literal, in this case, a literal city referred to.

So we have a great deal of symbolism; but, at the same time, there is an affirmation that we have a real city before us here. One of the ancients, one of the early Church fathers said this, “Embodiment is the end of all of the ways of God.”

One of the most modern systematic theologians has put it this way, obviously borrowing from that individual, though he does not cite him, he says, “Corporality” I like embodiment much better, that’s easier for the average man to understand, but he said, “Corporality is the end of the ways of God.” That’s the reason that he didn’t cite it, I guess. He changed one word in the quotation and expressed the same idea; that embodiment is the end of all the ways of God. That’s why the resurrection of the body, for example, is such a great hope for Christians. Embodiments is the end of the ways of God. We’re not talking about some anemic, pale beyond, that is totally, what we would call, mystical and spiritual, though this is obviously spiritual. Spiritual is an adjective that I know means is contrary to embodiment or corporality as is evidence in the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ. So John does not point his readers to a pallid, anemic beyond, for the soul. Or, as Suzanne de Dietrich has said, “The place is not some pale paradise peopled by pure spirits.” We are talking about a real place, with real individuals, who are going to be within it. And a city that is described here, in such a way as to communicate to us the fact that it’s a real city and it has, what shall we say, characteristics that are real and vital and literal in that sense, though they may be put in symbolic terms.

Well, brings us to the interpretations of the commentators, and this is the major thing that we want to talk about, because this is really one of the issues that is involved in our study of The Divine Purpose of the Ages.

I once heard a teacher say, “When I read the commentators, I think of that text of Scripture, ‘All we like sheep have gone astray, and turned everyone to his own way.’” Sometimes, in theological seminary and Bible institutes and Bible colleges, teacher, unfortunately, use that and then they encourage their students to read simply the Bible and nothing else. Nothing could be worse as advice, for young men, than to read simply

the Bible and not read the commentators. I know of literally scores of young men who teach the word of God, who would be much better if they never read anything but the commentators, so far as their message is concerned, because they are so immature that it would be better for them to lean on the godly giants who have preceded them, rather than trust themselves in their immaturity, to the word of God alone, but we don't have to decide one or the other. The proper thing is to read the Bible; but read also the things that God, the Holy Spirit, has taught other men down through the centuries. So we are not arrogant; we don't say we don't need the men that God has taught, God the Holy Spirit has taught. We don't take the position that everything that God the Holy Spirit has taught others down through the centuries is rather worthless, so far as I'm concerned. I don't need to consult it at all. That's a great mistake. So we do listen to what others have to say. But we remember that over the comments of commentators, finally, is the word of God. And even over the great confessions, in which the church has found some agreement down through the years.

In the final analysis, councils and creeds do err. But now, with that as an introduction, let's turn to this particular passage and seek to answer the question, what is meant by John's picture here, of the eternal state or the new heavens and the new earth. And what I want to do, as you can tell from the outline, is to give attention to the viewpoint of Anthony Hoekema, probably the finest amillennial scholar of the present day, in eschatology and, of course, a good scholar in other ways, too.

Professor Hoekema, we referred to him a number of times, is now an emeritus professor of systematic theology at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids. A very fine man. As I say, I've said this two or three times, not too long ago, it's so amazing to me that people who are Evangelicals and who profess to study Holy Scripture and study eschatology, neglect those who have opposing viewpoints within the Christian family, and who've expressed them in such a cogent way as Professor Hoekema has. And, as I have mentioned to you before, there are several men who teach eschatology and evangelical

institutions, and I've asked them purposely, “Have you read Anthony Hoekema's “The Bible in the Future”?” I've never had one, yet, say to me, “Yes, I have read it.” That's amazing. So we want to take a look at Professor Hoekema here.

Now, Professor Hoekema is an amillennialist and, as a result of this, for him there is no one thousand-year-reign of our Lord on the earth. In Revelation chapter 20, verse 4 through verse 6, we've already looked at his views in some detail, for him the millennium is now. In that sense, he is in harmony with most of the amillennial teaching. But, one way in which Professor Hoekema has differed from amillennialists, generally, is that he has contended that the new heavens and the new earth is a “renewed” earth. And since the new earth is a renewed earth, one finds the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies in the new earth of the future. Now, you can see the reason that Professor Hoekema wants to do this; he acknowledges that many of his amillennialist friends have been wrong in saying that the passages of the Old Testament in which the future is looked at and the kingdom is set forth, do not have any fulfillment in the future at all, but are being fulfilled at the present time.

Professor Hoekema has pointed out that if you read the Old Testament, you get the impression, the very strong impression, that those passages are to be fulfilled in the future and not in the present. And so he has with some others who preceded him, he has attached himself to the view that the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Kingdom of God upon the earth are to be fulfilled not in the millennial earth; but in the new earth of the new heavens and the new earth. And he argues the point cogently and he argues the point quite well. And if you have never sought to answer Professor Hoekema, then most of the time he carries the day.

When I was teaching eschatology at Trinity Seminary, this was for five years, I had all of my students, every year, sometimes I taught that course twice in the year, I had them read Hoekema's “The Bible in the Future.” It was very interesting to see the students wrestle with it. They had never really wrestled with anything like that. And I

lost one or two or three, too, who were so impressed by what Professor Hoekema said and were unable to answer the viewpoints of Professor Hoekema, and I, in many cases, they were individuals who were predisposed to amillennialism anyway but, nevertheless, we lost two or three that way. But the great mass of the men, and there probably were a total of five hundred, at least, over the five years, the great mass of them after they wrestled with him, I had them write a critique always. Then would, after they had wrestled with it, his book a good bit, would come up with some very significant and fruitful criticisms of Professor Hoekema and were, therefore, a whole lot stronger in their own premillennial views as a result of it.

Professor Hoekema, then, finds the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament in the new earth, which he conceives as being as renovated following the Second Advent. In the new earth, the Old Testament prophecies find their full fulfillment; and, therefore, it's proper to say that those texts in the Old Testament are to be fulfilled in the future. There are some difficulties, however, that one encounters as he thinks about Professor Hoekema's viewpoint. And I'd like to just suggest two or three of them. We don't have time to deal with all of them.

First of all, since we have done this in the light of our study of Revelation 20:4 through 6, we have sought to show and, I think, I have shown rather convincingly that Revelation 20:4 through 6, establishes with many other passages the hope of a theocratic kingdom on the earth.

Now, that is indicated by the context of Revelation chapter 20, because just preceding the Lord Jesus returns to the earth, in his Second Advent. There is a great struggle and battle on the earth. And then following the brief account of the binding of Satan, a description is given of our Lord ruling and reigning. It's not stated in chapter 20:4 through 6, that he rules and reigns upon the earth. But the implication in the light of his return to the earth, in chapter 19, and following quickly upon it, the reference to the ruling and reigning, strongly suggests that we are talking about ruling and reigning upon

the earth. That is, the earth to which he comes, at his Second Advent, which is this earth, this earth, not a new earth, but this earth.

Further, in Revelation chapter 5 in verse 9, in this very same book, reference is made there to ruling. And in the 9th verse of chapter 5, we read, “And they sang a new song, saying, ‘Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed to God by thy blood [some] out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and they shall reign upon the earth.’” There’s no indication that that is anything but the earth, again, to which our Lord comes at his Second Advent.

Further, other passages establish an ethnic future for Israel in which the nation, again, has a preeminent place among the Gentile nations. Professor Hoekema does not allow for any such in his viewpoint because for him, the new heavens and the new earth is the eternal state; and such distinctions are not found within his own theological viewpoint. I would suggest the reading of passages like Isaiah chapter 2, verse 1 through verse 5, and particularly, Isaiah 60, verse 1 through verse 14. Professor Hoekema’s claim for the fulfillment of prophecies of the Old Testament in the New Testament does not stand up in some of the passages which he, himself, sets forward as supporting his views. Now, turn for just a moment to Isaiah chapter 11, and this is a chapter, which Professor Hoekema lays a great deal of stress upon. In chapter 11, we have a reference to the emergence of the branch from the roots of Jesse, the rod out of the stem out of Jesse. We have a reference to his, the spirit of God resting upon him. We have reference to his reigning, “With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” And you can see that right here, lying in the background of this, is what is stated in Revelation chapter 19, the Second Coming of the Lord, and the overthrow of his enemies, then a reference to the ruling and reigning. “And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reigns,” and

so on. And, notice, in verse 4, we have reference to the earth, “He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth,” obviously the present earth, not the new earth.

Verse 9, we read, “They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.” Well, for Professor Hoekema, he has to give this a different sense. The term earth in verse 4, has a difference sense from the sense in verse 9.

Then in verse 12, we read this, “And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” And, again, the earth as we know it. And on top of that, in verse 10, we read, “And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.” And so what we have here is Professor Hoekema’s, I think, insurmountable problem. He has to show us how the term “earth” here can mean new earth; when in these instances it, obviously, is a reference to the physical earth that we know as the earth today. Can he show that earth means “new earth” in these verses? I don’t think that can be done. You may read his argument, but, I think, in the final analysis, you’ll have to agree, that he has not made his point.

Can, also, he show the preeminence of Israel in this particular kingdom of God upon the earth, as is expressed in verse 10? And, of course, if you read, again, Professor Hoekema, you’ll find that that’s something that he cannot do. Well, it’s natural for Professor Hoekema, then, to make this claim. He makes the claim that the term “land” is a term that, while in the Old Testament it may be rather limited, in the New Testament it’s given an expanded sense. And we are to understand it in the expanded sense. And, he has appealed to Revelations to Romans chapter 4 in verse 13. I think I referred to this previously. I say a lot of things in these classes that I don’t have in my notes. You’ll understand, if there is repetition, it’s because my mind has forgotten what I said previously.

Verse 13 of Romans 4, we read, “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law but through the righteousness of faith.” Now, it is the contention of Professor Hoekema and others, as well, that what is “land” in the Old Testament, and a specific reference to land, has become in the New Testament the world, as a whole. And, thus, an expansion of the significance of land to encompass the whole world and, by so doing, an attempt is made to make the promises of the Old Testament promises that go beyond the restoration of the land set out in the Old Testament to the nation Israel. That text is the only one that I know to which appeal is made; but, I think, it’s a failure to understand the context. Let’s just take a look at it.

Now, remember, the term “world” is a term that could refer to the physical earth. In fact, we use it in that sense. We have, in Greek, two worlds for world. In the New Testament, one *kosmos* the term that has many different meanings, but it can refer to world, in that sense. We also have another word that refers to the inhabited earth, *oikoumene*. That term is found in some places translated “earth” or I’m not sure, I didn’t look this up, but probably you will find it, references in some places, translated as “world.” But this is the word *kosmos*. But look at the context, the world equals earth; and, thus, the whole of the earth or is this the world of individuals who are the recipients of the Abrahamic promises? That is, Jews and Gentiles. Well, read on.

We read, for example, in verse 12, “Abraham has become the father of the circumcision, to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised.” In other words, Abraham is the father of Jewish believers; and he’s the father of Gentile believers. “For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.” So he is talking about the world of individuals, Jews and Gentiles, confirmed as you read on down in verse 16, “Therefore it is of faith that it might be by grace.” And verse 17, “As it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations.” There it is, “father of many nations.” So

what he is talking about is not the land promise, here, but the promises of justification by faith, that are given to Gentile and Jewish believers, who follow Abraham in the faith that God gave the patriarch.

So I'm sorry Mr. Hoekema. I cannot accept your idea that “land” has become world, here. It cannot stand. World is used here as often of peoples, of the numerous seed of Abraham. So as far as Revelation 21 and 22, are concerned, Professor Hoekema's viewpoint, I do not think can stand the test of exegesis.

There is another interpreter, a very important interpreter, who is commonly overlooked, simply because his work is a massive work. Now, I wouldn't want to address anyone and say, “Have you read George N. H. Peters' “Theocratic Kingdom” a three volume work? Each of the volumes having from five to six hundred pages. Not only that, but when you look at the pages, you discover that there are two kinds of print on the pages; ordinary print and small print. And it's rather discouraging to discover that the small print gives you the impression that it's just as common as the big print. So what we have is twenty-two thousand pages and a great part of it is small print. It's a massive work. Furthermore, there's a lot of repetition in it, and one like reading John Owen, finds his mind drifting off and thinking about playing eighteen holes of golf or something else while he's reading the book.

But this Lutheran scholar spent his whole lifetime studying the theocratic kingdom. And, of course, by theocratic kingdom, we're talking about that which we commonly call the millennial kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, that would not do George Peters justice because one of the points that Mr. Peters makes, and, I think, he's right in it is that we've laid far too much stress on the interim aspect of the theocratic kingdom.

The theocratic kingdom is an eternal kingdom, encompassing not simply the millennial kingdom, but the eternal ages that lie beyond. And, therefore, the millennium is simply a short, and very brief, part of the eternal, mediatorial; and, finally, also,

immediatorial or nonmediatorial kingdom of God. It's the eternal kingdom of God and this is the interim aspect of it.

Well, anyway, Professor Peters, a great student of the theocratic kingdom, expresses himself in these ways. First, he identifies Isaiah chapter 60, and Isaiah chapter 65, and chapter 66, where in the Old Testament we have the only Old Testament occurrences of the expression “new heavens and new earth.” He identifies those passages with 2 Peter 3:13, where we have reference to “new heavens and new earth” in Peter's second epistle. And in Revelation chapter 21, he identifies them as each referring to the Messianic Kingdom.

Now, that's to me, sound exegesis. That is, to take the first occurrence of these expressions, the first and only in the Old Testament, and to find them picked up by the Apostle Peter and then by the Lord Jesus Christ, himself, who gave the revelation to John in the Book of Revelation. So when we read the new heavens and the new earth, we are talking about that of which Peter speaks in chapter 3 of his second letter; and also, of what John is speaking in Revelation chapter 21. So Professor Peters, then, makes the connection between these passages and says they are all referring to the eternal kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, a kingdom that has mediatorial and non-mediatorial aspects.

Second, he sees the kingdom, then, as an eternal kingdom.

And, third, he feels that these passages in 2 Peter, verse 10, verse 11, verse 12, which do pose some serious problems for premillennialists, he conceives them as speaking of a renewal not a destruction of the present earth. The Messianic Kingdom, then, is an eternal kingdom. That's expressed specifically in 2 Peter 1:11.

There are some good features to Peters' view; the identification of the passages of the New Testament with Isaiah 65 and 66, is sound exegesis, methodologically. And on the other hand, there are difficulties, it seems to me. First, the order of the events that we've noticed in Revelation chapter 19, 20, and 21. Because, you can see from this that what Professor Peters or what Doctor Peters must do is to treat Revelation 19, as a

reference to the Second Advent to the earth. Then following that the overthrow of the enemies at the end of the chapter; then, the binding of Satan; then, the Kingdom of God upon the earth; all following chronologically; and then, the final rebellion; and then, the judgment of the lost. But then in chapter 21, we go back again to the millennial kingdom or the Kingdom of God upon the earth. So in other words, there is a reversal of the progress of the chronology. That's a weakness with his view. So that expression, “And I saw, and I saw, and I saw, and I saw,” which we noted was very significant for the chronology of those things is broken by the way in which Mr. Peters develops this.

Second, there are things in the new heavens and the new earth that are hard to identify with the renewed earth; such as the Tree of Life, in Revelation 22 in verse 2; the absence of a temple in chapter 21 in verse 22; and the sea in chapter 21, verse 1. And, perhaps, the sun and the night though George Peters does try to answer some of these questions.

The question of the logical complement of Genesis 1, is also raised, as well, because as you read the Bible, you begin with Paradise; and then, if you read through the last two chapters as “of the new heavens and new earth” and that beyond the interim millennial kingdom, then you begin with the paradise of God and you conclude with the paradise of God; and you have a marvelous little picture of God's beginnings, the fall, and then the work of God, through the Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit, to bring man and the creation back into communion and fellowship with him. And chapters 21 and 22, then, form a nice climax and capstone for the divine program. That is not it's obscured a bit by George Peters view.

Doctor Pentecost, at Dallas Seminary, a friend whom I appreciate very much and have known for many, many years. When I was first preaching at Grace Bible Church, many years ago, I can claim credit for this, I asked Dwight, who had come back to take his doctorate at Dallas Seminary and was, actually, a student of mine in that work, I asked him to take the Adult Sunday School class in Grace Bible Church, in which he taught, and

he usually supplied the pulpit when I would be out of town. And so we became very close friends and have remained good friends through the years; and I have great respect for Doctor Pentecost.

Doctor Pentecost, however, and, I think, he would smile at this, he is noted for a number of exotic views in interpretation of Scripture. His view is simply this. And, I think, we should notice it. It's had wide acceptance among certain premillennialists. He thinks that chapter 21, verse 1 through 8, is a vision of the eternal state; but that chapter 21, verse 9 through chapter 22, verse 5, is a vision of the earth during the millennium. So in other words, we have these two chapters broken up. The first part of the eternal state; and then we return, we revert to a vision of the earth, during the millennium. Something like eternity over time. And that, as an individual dies in the millennial state, he enters the new Jerusalem, which Dr. Pentecost has conceived as hovering over the earth during the whole of the thousand years of the millennial kingdom upon the earth.

So the city descends toward the earth, but never reaches the earth, and hovers over the millennial kingdom, as a city up in the sky. Now, Doctor Pentecost doesn't tell us how many feet it is in the sky and he'd laugh and say that's an unfair question. But to him, above it, above the kingdom and the things that are transpiring upon the earth is the New Jerusalem. When an individual on the earth dies, he enters that particular city.

Now, that's Professor Pentecost's solution. You see, what he was troubled by is a natural question, do these two chapters have to do with the millennial kingdom or do they have to do with the eternal state. And he has sought to answer it by saying that part of it has to do with the millennial kingdom. But he has something of a reversion, himself, in his view. There are other objections that I raise to this view, that I call an exotic view. In the first place, there is this retrogression in time; after we've already had the final judgment and the kingdom has passed, and the rebellion after the kingdom is passed, then we have at the end of chapter 22, chapter 21, and 22, a reversion to a description of the New Jerusalem, during the time of the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Further, there is not evidence at all, in my opinion, for the city hovering over the earth. Now, Doctor Pentecost tries to make verse 9 and verse 10 of chapter 21, evidence for it. I'll read it to you.

“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, ‘Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife.’ And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God.”

And Professor Pentecost makes the point that it doesn't say the city lands; but, it's descending. So it's descending for a thousand years. Well, I don't think that that can stand; that's why I call this an exotic view. And we read, for example, back in chapter 10 in verse 1 of the Book of Revelation, “And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven.” That's the same word, incidentally, in the original text. “Descending from heaven, clothed with a cloud: and a rainbow was upon his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire: And he had in his hand a little book open: and he set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth.” So he was descending and he came to the earth. I think the implication, though it's not stated, the implication of chapter 21, of the city that is descending out of heaven from God, is that it comes to this new earth that has just been mentioned in the preceding context. So, I must confess, I haven't been impressed by that particular argument.

One also might ask, how can the kings of the earth, if millennial, have access to the heavenly city? Because, later on, in this same chapter, it says that they have access to the city. So how are the kings of the earth going to have access to a city that is hovering up in space? Well, we don't find any answer to that question here.

Let me come, finally then, to a view that, I think, is a bit more scriptural and more satisfying. I'd like to take a cue from one of the oldest of the interpreters and, probably,

the finest of the students of eschatology of the early Church fathers, and I'm speaking about Irenaeus, as you can note.

Irenaeus had a view of these things that, to my mind, affords a clue for the interpretation of these two chapters. He suggested that the new heaven and the new earth corresponded in their change of places with the new man's experiences. Now, the latter's experiences include the three experiences that we're all familiar with: just think about your spiritual experience.

What are the three experiences that will stand out in your life? Well, first of all, your life under the curse. We are born in sin and this creation lies under the curse as a result of Adam's fall in the Garden of Eden because, this creation was identified with Adam. And when Adam fell the creation was also a fallen creation and judged. So the first of these experiences is the experience of being under the curse and judgment of sin. And, second, the experience that you believers have is that of being redeemed. And then, thirdly, because your redemption only touches your spirit, of resurrection in glorification. So, in other words, your experience may be put under these three simple categories. Under the curse, fallen; redeemed, and, ultimately, glorified through bodily resurrection.

Now, the striking thing about the creation is, first, that it is identified with us; and secondly, that the Bible makes it very plain that the experience of the creation is an experience that follows our experience.

Look at the creation today. The creation is under the curse. Paul speaks about it in Romans 8. You read verse 19 through verse 23, he will talk about the creation groaning and travailing in pain together now. It lies under the judgment of the curse. It does not have any redemption at the present time. But, now, the creation will have its redemption. Paul calls it a redemption but it follows our redemption.

In other words, we are under the curse; we're redeemed at the present, so far as that period is concerned, we look forward to glorification by resurrection. The creation identified with us follows in subsequent experience. In other words, nothing has

happened to the creation yet. Look at Texas. It hasn't been redeemed. Look at it. Go out there to Fort Worth, or just go to Fort Worth. [Laughter] Pardon me, if you grew up in Fort Worth, you'll understand it was not serious.

But, anyway, the creation has not been redeemed. But we know it shall be redeemed. Now, I suggest to you, that the creation, this is a suggestion, that the creation will also have its third step of glorification, and that will take place at the time when this creation is supplanted by the new heavens and the new earth. So we have the creation under the curse; the creation redeemed and renewed, for the kingdom of God upon the earth, for the thousand years but glorified in the stage of the new heavens and the new earth. In other words, the eternal kingdom has two stages: its millennial stage and then its stage that follows it. The eternal kingdom has two stages.

Now, I'd like to suggest too, that perhaps there is some connection with Paul's statement in 1 Corinthians 15, where he talks about the mediatorial kingdom and then he talks about the nonmediatorial phase of the kingdom that follows. Because he talks about the Son delivering up the kingdom to the Father that God may be all in all. So in the unfolding of the divine kingdom, there is its mediatorial phase and its non-mediatorial phase. So phase one then, has to do with the renewal of the creation by the lifting of the curse, that's represented by Revelation 20:4 through 6, and our ruling and reigning with our Lord upon the earth, following the Second Advent.

Let me read you Isaiah 35, 1 through 10, in which this is expressed.

“The wilderness and the desert will be glad. And the Arabah [or the desert] will rejoice and blossom; like the crocus, it will blossom profusely and rejoice with rejoicing and shout of joy. The glory of Lebanon will be given to it, the majesty of Carmel and Sharon. They will see the glory of the Lord, the majesty of our God. Encourage the exhausted, and strengthen the feeble. Say to those with palpitating heart take courage, fear not, behold, your God will come with vengeance; the recompense of God will come, but He

will save you. And the ransomed of the Lord will return and come with joyful shouting to Zion with everlasting joy upon their heads they will find gladness and joy and sorrow and sighing will flee away.”

Israel is, again, put at the head of the nations and with all that, that means. Phase two is the phase of the resurrection and glorification of the creation, seen then in Revelation 21, verse 1 through 22, verse 5.

One last thing, I'm sorry I'm going over a minute or two, hope it don't ruin all of the faith ministry's taping of this, but just a confirmation of this from the exegesis of chapter 21. I'd like for you to notice that some suggestions that this city is a glorified city, and that Irenaeus was really onto something worthwhile. Verse 18, and we read, “And the building of it was of jasper; and the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass.”

Now, let me ask you a question, if you had a gold ring, is it like clear glass? No, it's not. The kind of gold referred to here is not the kind of gold that we know as gold. It's very precious. It has such a resemblance to it that that figure can be used. But this is the kind of gold you can see through. That's one of the evidences that we have here a symbolic picture. In fact, glorification is really suggested. Notice, verse 11 of chapter 21, about the city, “It has the glory of God, and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.” And then in verse 23, we'll have to stop with this. “And the city had no need of the sun neither of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God did lighten it. And the Lamb is the light thereof.”

So then I suggest to you that this, which is a nice parallel to what we read in Genesis, is the kind of picture that John presents to us; the new heavens and the new earth represent the theocratic kingdom, a kingdom that has two distinguishable phases. One the period of Satan's binding and the non-resurrection of the lost dead. And the other, the phase of the non-mediatorial kingdom, that stretches out into eternity when God is to come all in all, according to the tenor of Paul's great passage in 1 Corinthians

15: 20 through 28. So we have then “new heavens and new earth” is a reference to what we would call the eternal state; or heaven itself.

Let’s bow together in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for Thy word and we thank Thee for all of the indications found in it of the concern and love of our Triune God for the saints of God. We give Thee thanks and praise for the relationship into which Thou hast brought us, by the eternal covenant, which Jesus Christ has consummated and ratified in His blood. And we thank Thee for the eternal kingdom, and look forward to the full manifestation of the glory of our God to us. Accept our thanks and our worship; and may Thy grace and power go with us as we see to please Thee in our daily life.

For Jesus’ sake. Amen.