



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Ezekiel 34:23-24

“The Kingdom: Delights and Dilemmas”

TRANSCRIPT

We are finishing our study on the Kingdom of God and actually drawing near to the conclusion of our series on eschatology. The subject is “The Kingdom: Delights and Dilemmas,” and as I mentioned in our last study last week, I want, as we conclude our study of the kingdom, to deal with a few of the interesting questions that are generally raised by people who think about life in the kingdom of God upon the earth.

As a Scripture passage or two for our study, so I want you to turn with me to the passage in Ezekiel chapter 34 and then in Ezekiel chapter 37, and we’ll read four verses which have to do with the kingdom of God upon the earth.

Ezekiel chapter 34 in verse 23 and 24 is our first passage. As you can see from the heading in your Bible, this context has to do with the restoration of Israel and the setting up of the Davidic king and kingdom. Remember this is the result of a covenant that God made with David many hundreds of years ago. Verse 23 and 24:

“And I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even my servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them; I the Lord have spoken it.”

Notice now the particular force of these words is that there is to be one shepherd over Israel during the time of the kingdom. He will be the one who feeds them, and he is called my servant, David. And furthermore, God says that he will be their God and David shall be a prince among them. And then, as if to be sure that we understand that it is going to come to pass just as he has said it is, as wild and bizarre as it might seem, He adds, I the Lord have spoken it.

Then in the 37th chapter in verses 24 and 25, we have another passage, which has to say a great deal of the same thing. This is the famous passage in which we have the story of the dry bones which also is a passage dealing with Israel’s restoration. And then near the end of the passage we read in verse 24:

“And David my servant shall be king over them; and they all shall have one shepherd: they shall also walk in my ordinances, and observe my statutes, and do them. And they shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob my servant, in which your fathers have dwelt; and they shall dwell in it, even they, and their children, and their children's children for ever: and my servant David shall be their prince for ever.”

This was the passage -- I know that you probably have forgotten this. Frankly, I had forgotten this, too, except that I have note or two in my margins of my Bible here. This is the passage, when we were talking about the New Covenant and the Davidic covenant and the Abrahamic Covenant, that I pointed out contained a reference to each of these three unconditional covenants. The New Covenant referred to in verse 23, then the Davidic Covenant in verse 24, and in verse 25 with the mention of the lambs, the reference to the Abrahamic Covenant. So this is a great passage in which these three

unconditional covenants are grouped together in token of the fact that in the future, God is going to fulfill each one of them. He will give them the land that he has promised them. He will give them the king that he has promised them. And he will also give them the forgiveness of sins he has promised them in the New Covenant.

Now, we’re to look at the subject, “The Kingdom: Delights and Dilemmas.” The dreams of Utopia are common to mankind. And these dreams of Utopia extend from the time of Plato’s *Republic* in which he offered his readers something like a Utopia, through Augustine’s great work on the *City of God*, through Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* from which we have obtained in English the use of the term “Utopia” as something that is an ideal, usually an impractical kind of ideal that we shall never attain, and on to the satiric *Brave New World* of Huxley written in 1932.

So you can see that from the time before Christ down through the Christian centuries on into the present modern world we have had mankind dreaming over a beautiful time to come in which everything would be lovely and sweet upon the earth. The interesting thing about it is that there is an Atlantis, there is an El Dorado, there are Isles of the Blessed. In a word, there is a golden age and a golden place, and it is found in the millennial kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And I am inclined to think, this may be my musings which do not have any real justification, but nevertheless, I am inclined to think that all of these dreams of mankind -- and I’ve only mentioned a few of them, because if you’ll study the history of Utopia you will discover that many, many men have offered us in various works of art and literature these dreams of Utopia --we have a reflection of what is to really come to pass through the works of the Lord Jesus.

Now, we who read the Scriptures know, of course, that we shall not have any Utopia upon the earth as long as our Lord Jesus Christ has not come. The Scriptures are very plain. They teach that there will never be any kingdom upon the earth brought in by men, but the kingdom of God will be brought in by God. But we do read of the kingdom, and so I think that these hopes of men are just reflections of what God has put

in the heart of man. You can see, of course, it has been blunted, it has been thwarted, it is crooked, just as crooked as the desires of outstanding world leaders to be that ruler themselves. Because we have this crooked desire in the hearts of men like Stalin and Khrushchev and Charlemagne and Napoleon and Alexander and the rest to be a kind of world ruler. And these are reflections of the fact that God has ordained that men should rule and reign over the earth under the Lord Jesus.

The Scriptures describe the time when there shall be a true Utopia in Psalm 72, for example, and in the 8th verse describing the kingdom of the Lord Jesus. The Psalmist says: “He shall have dominion also from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth. They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him and his enemies shall lick the dust. The kings of Tarshish and of the Isles shall bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba shall offer gifts. Yea all the kings shall fall down before him, all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he cries, the poor also, and him that have no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their souls from deceit and violence and precious shall be their blood in his sight. And He shall live! And to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba.

“Prayer also shall be made for him continually and daily shall he be praised. There shall be a handful of grain in the earth upon the top of the mountain. The fruit there of shall shape like Lebanon; and they of the city shall flourish like the grass of the earth. His name shall endure forever; his name shall be continued as long as the sun. And all men shall be blessed in him, all nations shall call him blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be his glorious name forever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory.”

Now, you can see this is a lovely picture of the time when the Lord Jesus shall be here. He shall rule and reign; all of the kings of the earth shall worship Him and glorify Him, and the whole earth shall be filled with his Glory.

Now, we are to understand these things literally. When we read that the whole earth shall be filled with his Glory, we mean that this is an earthly kingdom. There are, however, in the midst of these glorious pictures of the future, some problems of interpretation. And as we conclude our study of the kingdom and deal with some of the things that touch the kingdom, I want to try to at least stir up your thinking by referring to a few of the questions that come to us as we study about the millennial kingdom.

So Roman I, the ruler over the kingdom and (A) His sovereign character: Scripture demands, as we have seen from the passage in Ezekiel chapter 34 and 37, that there is to be a Davidic sovereign, he is called my servant David. Now, he is a sovereign ruler. So far as we can tell, he is totally sovereign in his ruling. There are passages of Scripture that have a great deal to say about him as a person. We, for example, last week studied Isaiah chapter 11. And in Isaiah chapter 11 in the 1st verse we read:

And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. I commented upon the fact that this 1st verse of chapter 11 stresses the human side of the Davidic king. He is to be a little shoot out of the stem of Jesse. He’s to be a branch, a nature out of his roots. So stress rests upon the fact that looking at him outwardly one would never think that he would be a ruler, such as he is to become. But then in the 10th verse -- I incidentally, made reference to the fact that in that day there shall be a root of Jesse -- so in one place he is called a rod out of the stem of Jesse, in the other place he is called the root of Jesse himself. In the one case, we have stress upon the human nature of our Lord, his weakness, his humiliation. In the other place, we have stress upon his sovereignty and his divine character because he is the root of Jesse. In the one he comes from Jesse, in the other Jesse comes from him. And in this relationship between the two and the contrast between the two, we have the two aspects of the ruler who shall rule in the millennial kingdom. He is a man, possessed of human nature, but that he also is a sovereign, divine person.

So, as we were saying Sunday morning, he is a divine person who at a particular point in time took to himself human nature and thus became the God-man. He is also an autocratic ruler. In the 4th verse we read: But 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, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked one. In other words, the rule of our Lord Jesus is not a benevolent kind of rule in which he bears with men in their sins and in their weaknesses and in their rebellion against the throne of God. He is an autocratic ruler. It is not, you see, a democracy.

History has indicated that democracy is not the best form of government. Now, you may like democracy very much, I have said this in the presence of some people, and they have begun to see red immediately, because they really think that democracy is the greatest form of government that one can possibly imagine.

Now, Winston Churchill did say that “Democracy was the worst form of human government that one could possibly think of, except for all of those other forms of government that have been tried.” [Laughter] So for him, every form of government was bad. And there was only one form of government that could possibly be good and that is divine government. Now, Mr. Churchill said that democracy was the best of a poor lot. I do not agree with that myself, which means, of course, probably I’m wrong, because Mr. Churchill was a genius and I’m not.

I personally think that an autocracy has a much better chance of being a good government than a democracy. In the first place, it’s a whole lot less costly, and I know it’s a great deal more efficient. And while it’s true that we may obtain some man like Stalin or a Hitler or a Napoleon or one of the other types that may not be so good -- I don’t really want to put Napoleon in the same class with Stalin or Hitler -- But, nevertheless, it is true that if we have an autocracy we might have one that is not benevolent, but when we do have a benevolent autocracy or even a benevolent monarchy, we have a much better form of government, in my opinion, than democracy.

The ideal government, of course, is a theocracy, and that is what the kingdom will be. And the sovereign of the kingdom of God upon the earth will be a theocratic ruler and fortunately he will be a benevolent, theocratic ruler.

Well, that brings us to the first of our problems. What about the passages of the Old Testament that speak of David as the ruler in the kingdom? We say the Lord Jesus is the ruler in the Davidic kingdom upon the earth. But those passages of Scripture, for example, the ones that I read in Ezekiel, say that David is going to sit upon the throne. Then over in the Book of Hosea -- these are not the only passages, but here is another one -- in the Book of Hosea, we have another passage that says a similar thing.

In chapter 3 in verse 5 -- now, I know I say it’s illegal to ask you to turn to one of the minor prophets, one of these small books. And so I’ll have a brief intermission while you find Hosea chapter 3. Hosea chapter 3 in verse 5 reads: afterwards, -- it’s page 921 in the approved edition of the King James Version, I’ve said so often: Afterwards shall the children of Israel return -- and Mr. Wilson will find it sooner or later. There he’s got it or at least he’s acting like he’s got it [laughter] -- Afterwards shall the children of Israel return and seek the Lord their God and David their king and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days. Incidentally, the [indistinct] in the Old Testament paraphrased at this place as a word of explanation. This is King Messiah, saying that David, their king, is King Messiah.

But now, it is true that the David referred to in these passages that have to do with the kingdom is the Lord Jesus. In other words, is the term “David” used metaphorically of Christ, or does it refer to a resurrected David? Commentators have debated this, and students of Scripture have debated this considerably. If you look at some of the books on prophecy, you’ll find reasons given for and against. It has been said for example, that the Lord Jesus is never called David anywhere else. He is called the son of David, and he is called a root out of the stem of Jesse or the root of Jesse, he’s related to the lion of David, but he is never called David. David, incidentally, means “beloved.” And so the argument

for taking this to be a reference to the historical David resurrected from the dead and given rule in the kingdom is, generally speaking, based upon the fact that the term “David” is never outside of these passages referred to our Lord Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, if you take the other views say that David is the ancestor of the Lord Jesus, and it would certainly be in keeping with the spirit of the Old Testament for him to be called my servant David, because that term might well be used metaphorically. And since the Lord Jesus as the Messiah is the servant of Jehovah, what more beautiful way to express the fact that he is David’s son and the one who shall sit on David’s throne for him to be called metaphorically my servant David? Very difficult to decide something like this. I can only say my opinion is that it is the Lord Jesus who rules on the throne and that this is the name that is given him metaphorically. But if David could be resurrected and put upon that throne under our Lord’s authority, well, it would not be a whole lot different from this interpretation. And so not a whole lot clearer, but still it is an interesting question.

Let’s move on to the fear of the kingdom. The fear includes, not only the natural world, as we pointed out last time, but also Israel and the Gentiles. And I am just going to look with you at a few passages in order to support the point that the king will reign as king over Israel. First of all, will you turn with me to Jeremiah chapter 23 verses 5 and 6? Jeremiah chapter 23 verses 5 and 6? This is the great passage from the Book of Jeremiah. And I was in the insurance business in Alabama; this is one of the passages that I memorized because I thought it was such a beautiful sentiment of the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus and the kingdom that would follow: “Behold,” -- Jeremiah says in chapter 23 verse 5 – “the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, the Lord our righteousness.”

Now, we have, incidentally, in this a beautiful lesson of the gospel. Paul says in Romans chapter 1 that the gospel is essentially this, that we have a righteousness of God by faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. That’s the essence of the gospel. That’s why the message concerning the Lord Jesus is good news, because if I believe in him, I’m given a righteousness which is acceptable before God. That’s good news. That is the gospel.

Now, notice he is called the Lord of all righteousness. Our righteousness does not come from our good works, our righteousness comes from our identification with him. And he says of our righteousness, because it is our day [indist.] He had died, he has been resurrected [indist]. So everything that he has done, he has done for those who are in him. Therefore, he is the Lord our righteousness. Jehovah, Tsidkenu, the Lord our righteousness. No righteousness for human works, he is our righteousness by virtue of what he is and what he has done.

Now, you can see here that Israel is promised a king, a righteous branch. And this king shall reign over them. He will reign over them. He will reign over a united Judah and Israel, other passages too. But they will be a true people of God. They will be admired by the Gentiles, other passages, too. That seems strange to us because we live in days in which the Gentile world is, generally speaking, not too happy over the fact that Israel is a chosen nation.

As you well know there is a great deal of anti-Semitism in this world. And some of it is not so blatant as that which we find in the Mideast now, but just a gentle dislike of the people who have the hooked noses. It is, I think, ultimately a little bit of displeasure over God’s election of them. But the time is coming when the Gentiles are going to rejoice over the fact that Israel is the head of the nation. Isn’t that amazing? Many Gentiles are not looking forward to that time. But we who know the Lord Jesus will look forward to that time and rejoice over it because, well they won’t be like they are today, then [laughter]. They won’t be, and you won’t be either. They shall all be different at that time.

Now, he will reign as king over the Gentiles. Will you turn with me to Daniel chapter 7 and verse 14? I know it’s tempting to say more than that, but I’m not going to say any more than that. Daniel chapter 7 in verse 14, and we read here and again we have a vision of the Messiah and in the 14th verse of the Book of Daniel, we read: “And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Notice in this passage the king here is said to be one whom all people, nations, and languages shall serve. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which shall not pass away. So he shall have an eternal kingdom, and his kingdom shall be a kingdom over the Gentiles. They shall be subservient to the Jews, but they shall joy in it because they too are a people of God. And finally, he shall be a king who rules with glorified saints.

Will you turn with me to 1 Corinthian chapter 6 in verse 2. 1 Corinthians chapter 6 in verse 2. Now this has to do with you and me. We read in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 in verse 2: Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints?

This text is to say very plainly that a Christian should never go to law with another Christian, they should bring it before the saints for adjudication. Why? Why should we not take our brother before the Gentile law court? Well, one of the reasons is in the 2nd verse: Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters? So you can see in this text here that he states that the saints shall judge the world. Turn over to 2 Timothy chapter 2 in verse 12. 2 Timothy chapter 2 verse 12: If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us: we shall reign with him. - - Now all Christians suffer. We shall reign with him.

In Revelation chapter 5 he states the same thing, you needn’t turn there. I’ll read the text for you: “And hath made us unto God a kingdom of priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Now, in Matthew chapter 19 in verse 28, we are told that Israel shall reign with the Lord Jesus. Matthew chapter 19 in verse 28, here we read: “And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye who hath followed me, in the regeneration (in the new birth, he refers to the creation) when the Son of Man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

But, what he has said is that the king when he comes shall have individuals who will reign with him. That church shall reign with him. You and I shall reign with him, for we are all kings. That’s why we ought to be able to judge these little matters over which we have disagreements down here upon the earth. And furthermore, Israel shall also reign with him.

If a similar king is required to establish Utopian conditions, then it’s reasonable that he should have similar subordinates, otherwise, failure to carry out his orders might take place. And so, since if we have a similar king who shall establish his kingdom upon the earth, it’s not surprising then that those who rule with him shall be similar individuals. You and I shall reign with him because at that time we will have our resurrection body, our old nature, our sin nature shall have been eradicated, and we shall no longer be subject to the bondage of sin. So we shall reign with him. And we shall reign under him and Israel likewise. Because, remember our study, we have been saying Israel shall be resurrected at the Second Advent of the Lord. So the Israelites, who are resurrected at the Second Advent, will also participate in our Lord’s ruling and reign, specifically, the twelve apostles who sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Romans 3, the subject of the kingdom. Now, we can describe the fear of the kingdom in different ways. I described the fear of the kingdom nationally in the preceding heading. I want to look at the subject of the kingdom from the standpoint of

their being glorified or not. So we have subjects in our Lord’s kingdom of God upon the earth who are both living and glorified saints. Incidentally, have you ever thought about the relative numbers of those who enter into the kingdom, who are still living in these bodies, who pass into the kingdom at the time of the Second Advent not experiencing at that time resurrection? Have you ever thought about the relative numbers of them, and over again, those who are resurrected in the church at the rapture, and those who are resurrected in Israel at the Second Advent and pass into the kingdom? Of which group shall there be the largest number? Will the largest number of individuals in the kingdom be living saints possessed of bodies such as yours and mine, or will they be glorified individuals, having glorified bodies? I don’t know the answer to that question.

Now, we do know that so far as Israel is concerned, there are going to be quite a few that enter into the kingdom without being resurrected. They shall be alive, because of their faith in the Lord Jesus, they pass into the kingdom. But it is only after tremendous judgment that they are brought to salvation. And there are indications that only one fourth of those in the land enter into the kingdom. The judgment in Jeremiah and Zechariah chapter 13 would seem to indicate that. So in the midst of those great judgments of the tribulation period, many, many thousands of Jewish people lose their lives in judgment. And let’s just assume, for the sake of discussion, there are three million people today, approximately, a little less in the land of Palestine, let’s assume that a third of them were to come through this period of refining, that would mean that one million or a little bit less will enter into the kingdom.

But how many of those who are glorified shall enter into the kingdom? Well, incidentally, there will probably be relatively few Gentiles who enter into the kingdom too, at that time. Only those who have treated the Jews well during the period of the judgment, as we read in Matthew chapter 25. So perhaps we have a few million that enter into the kingdom, but how many of the glorified enter into the kingdom? Well, all of the saints in the church age enter into the kingdom, so from the time of the Day of

Pentecost on down, all of the saints of all of that time rule and reign with our Lord in the kingdom.

Furthermore, all of the Israelites, saints of the Old Testament who are resurrected at the Second Advent, they enter into the kingdom. And then we are also told in Revelation chapter 7, that there is a great multitude that comes out of the Great Tribulation, and they come out of every tribe and kindred and tongue and nation and that no man is able to number them. So, an innumerable multitude comes out of the Great Tribulation period.

I don’t know of a single evangelist who wouldn’t like to be there to tally up the results of the decisions of the Great Tribulation period. Just think of the numbers they could send to headquarters. It’s not five thousand signed decision cards, or ten thousand, or fifteen, it’s so many we cannot even count them. The greatest statistics ever sent in by any evangelistic agency.

Now, if that is all true, then we would assume then that in the kingdom, the kingdom will be populated by far more resurrected saints than simply living saints in natural bodies. Now, don’t hold me to that, I’m speculating a little bit. But based on these passages of Scripture, there is something to be said, I think, for my position. So, the glorified ones are much larger in number at the beginning of the kingdom, but then during the period of time of the kingdom, there is going to be the populating of that kingdom. And so this imbalance will be corrected as the ages of the kingdom unfold. And, finally, there is evidence that the birth rate is going to be high and the death rate is very low. Isaiah has some things to say about that, and this would seem to indicate that by the time the kingdom nears its end, there are going to be countless numbers of people upon the earth who have not experienced resurrection.

Well, then, we have another question that arises out of this now, a problem. Where are these saints going to be living? Now, we know that those who are living on the earth who have not been resurrected, they’re going to be on the earth. There is an

earthly Jerusalem and Israel shall dwell in the land. And we know that Gentiles shall dwell over the face of the earth because we are told in the word of God that they come up every year to Jerusalem in order to worship there. They look forward to it, incidentally. They come up there to honor Israel as the head of the nation, then to honor the Messiah, particularly, who is king over the whole of the earth. Now, these are living saints, and so they come up to Jerusalem. So they are individuals dwelling on the earth, all over the face of the earth. And Israel is dwelling in the land, and the city of Jerusalem is full of converted Jewish men.

But where do the resurrected saints dwell? I have some good friends who have studied this in some detail, and they have some weird opinions about this. Sometimes I think that it’s pure speculation to even bring up a question like this, but sometimes I do like to speculate a little bit. I don’t want to be totally surprised when I get there. And furthermore, I don’t want all these people telling me I told you so [laughter].

Now, I have good friend, who is a very good friend of mine, and he and I discuss these things all the time, and he has one or two weird ideas. And his idea is based on Revelation chapter 21 which is the passage in which we have described the new Jerusalem. He reads Revelation 21:9 and 10 this way: “And there came unto me one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come here, 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 on the basis of this text, he comes to the astounding conclusion that throughout the whole of the millennial age, one thousand years, the city of the heavenly Jerusalem, this city of God, descending out of heaven is going to be hovering over the earth. It’s not going to actually touch the earth. But it’s going to be hovering throughout the whole of the kingdom theory.

Now, how he comes to that astounding conclusion, I don’t know except the text doesn’t say that the city descended to the earth. It says he saw it descending. Now, I claim that if he saw the holy Jerusalem descending to the earth that we could reasonably expect that it would land on the earth. It did come. But he insists, no, it’s going to hover over the earth for one thousand years. And furthermore, he has the astounding, amazing, utterly incomprehensible view for me, that that is an eternal city and down here is a temporal city, the city of Jerusalem during the millennial age. And life in the city which is hovering over us is life in the eternal space, whereas life down here is life in the kingdom. And so we have here in Revelation 21 and 22, not a picture of the kingdom and then the eternal space, but we have a picture of the eternal space and the kingdom in the same chapter.

Now, I cannot follow him there. I think that that is a rather incredible thing. So I am inclined to think then that what we have in Revelation chapter 21 beginning with verse 9 is a reference to the eternal state, and it does not really have a thing to do with the millennial kingdom upon the earth.

Now, my question was though, where do the resurrected saints live? It’s true they are here with our Lord ruling and reigning with him, but it’s also true that they are citizens of that heavenly city. Is it inconceivable that they should dwell in the heavenly city and rule and reign with our Lord here upon the earth? I don’t think that’s necessarily inconceivable. I think it’s very possible for them to be in heaven as their home and to come with Him to carry out missions that he may ask of them and command them. Because I don’t think that they’re going to have to catch a 747 or some other kind of plane to go back to heaven – they’re going to be able to pass from one place to the other without buying a ticket.

Now, another question that comes up here in connection with this is -- and I’m going now to take the position of a person who doesn’t believe there is going to be a kingdom at all on the earth. Let’s just assume for a moment that I am an amillennialist,

that I do not believe that there is going to be an earthly kingdom at all, that the whole program is going to conclude with an apostasy in the church in the last days. And then a period of Great Tribulation, have a prophetic judgment, and at the conclusion of that period of time in which also Israel shall have a magnificent conversion as a nation, the Lord shall come to the earth and settle the question of judgment and the eternal state shall begin at that time, and we have no earthly kingdom at all.

Now, I’m speaking to one of you people who are premillennialists and you believe that there is going to be a kingdom of God upon the earth. And you’ve got a lot of good reasons, and I’m on the defensive most of the time -- of course, I should be. [Laughter]. Because my view is still weak, but, after all, I do have a few points that I like throw up to you, because I think maybe I can stump you. And one of them is this: do you mean to tell me that we’re going to have a thousand years on the earth? And there are going to be resurrected saints on the earth? And they are going to be people with just natural bodies such as yours and mine now, when I am not resurrected? You mean to tell me that resurrected people are going to be walking around with unresurrected people? Now, that’s bizarre. The idea of having two different kinds of people like this on the earth at the same time, that’s crazy. Therefore, your doctrine is surely not Biblical doctrine. God wouldn’t confuse things like that, would he? What was he thinking?

Well, now if you were thinking a little bit and I hope you are, I think one of the first things you should say to me would be well when the Lord Jesus was here, he had a resurrected body, didn’t he? After the resurrection, didn’t he have fellowship with the saints who didn’t have a resurrected body? Yes. As a matter of fact, he was here for forty days teaching them the things concerning the kingdom. And so, if the Lord Jesus with a resurrected body could be here for forty days teaching the saints, why is it so incredible that the saints of God with their resurrected bodies might be here upon the earth for periods of time ruling and reigning with the Lord Jesus? I don’t think it’s quite as

incredible as my amillennial friends like to make it out to be. I don’t have to say it’s wrong.

Roman IV, the Spiritual Life of the Kingdom. The saints ruling in person no doubt worshiped with greater in degree and in genuineness than ever before. Never will there have been worship upon the earth as there is when the kingdom of God is upon the earth. And the leader of this worship is our Lord himself, and he leads not only in the sense that he governs, but in the sense that he conducts the worship of God.

Will you turn with me to Zechariah chapter 6 verse 12 through verse 15? Zechariah, another one of these minor prophets. I remember a friend of mine that had a series of messages called, “The Major Messages of the Minor Prophets.” They do have some major messages, and there is one of them in Zechariah chapter 6. Will you notice that our Lord here is said to be a King and a Priest. Listen: “And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The Branch; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord: Even he shall build the temple of the Lord; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule (shall sit and rule) upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.”

Now, what he means by that is that there shall be a harmony between the kingship and the priesthood for he has going to be a king/priest. Verse 14: “And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the Lord. And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and ye shall know that the Lord of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God.”

What this passage states then is that the Lord Jesus is not only going to be the king in the millennial kingdom, but he is going to be the priest. He is a king/priest. So, he rules and governs, but he also has authority in the realm of the worship of all of the

millennial kingdom in heaven. So, he is the one who mediates all the worship of God. So he is the leader in spiritual life of the kingdom.

(B) It’s spirituality. This kingdom is a spiritual kingdom. Now, I know that there are individuals who say the very idea of an earthly kingdom is carnal. Now, our millennial friends, again, they love to say that. They say the idea of an earthly kingdom is carnal and materialistic. And it is dishonoring to God to think of a kingdom of God upon the earth. Remember Augustine back in the beginning of this series, I commented on Augustine saying that he was once a premillennialist but he became amillennialist or he abandoned the doctrine of premillennialism because of the carnal banquetins of the premillennialist. He did not feel that the idea of an earthly kingdom was spiritual.

Now, I think at that time I used an illustration, but some of you were not there, and I’m going to take the liberty of using it again. It was given by a good friend of mine who is now with the Lord. He was speaking on this subject of the spirituality of the kingdom, and he was speaking particularly about these people who say that if it’s an earthly kingdom, it cannot be spiritual. And he said let me illustrate with a parable. During a church banquet, a group of preachers are discussing the nature of the kingdom of God. One of them expresses his view that the kingdom of God is a kingdom on the earth in which men live on the earth with the Lord Jesus. And there was a very rather belligerent 200-pound preacher who was at the banquet, and he snorted out, “Ridiculous, such an idea is nothing but materialism.”

Someone said, “Well, what’s your view?”

He said, “Well, the kingdom of God is a spiritual matter. The kingdom of God has already been established, and it’s within you. Don’t you gentlemen know that the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking as Paul says, but righteousness and joy and peace in the Holy Ghost? And with that he took his fork, reached hungrily across the table and speared another enormous piece of fried chicken. [Laughter]

My friend said nobody tried to answer him. As a matter of fact, no answer was necessary. He had answered his own argument. As the French would say, he was hoist on his own petard.

Now, unless some of you don’t quite understand what’s involved, what he meant is this. If the kingdom of God can exist now on the earth in a 200-pound preacher full of fried chicken without any reprehensible materialistic connotation, perhaps it also can exist in eating and drinking under more perfect conditions in a future millennial kingdom. Then my friend said, he had a sly sense of humor -- he said, personally I’ve always had a very high opinion of the value of fried chicken, but this was the first time I’d ever seen its apologetic value as an argument against the inconsistencies of that view of the kingdom based on the platonic notion of spirituality -- that is, that something cannot be spiritual if it is material. But you see the kingdom of God upon the earth is both a material kingdom and a spiritual kingdom, and it is perfectly harmonious to have something that is material and spiritual at the same time.

Preachers and fried chicken they go together, don’t they? Dr. Criswell, down at the First Baptist Church, says when a young man comes up to him and says, are you called to the ministry? He says my first question is, do you like fried chicken? [Laughter] Because he says, if he says I don’t like fried chicken, he’s not called to the ministry.

Now, a question arises at this point, and it has to do with the temple and the sacrifices, because we are talking about the spiritual life of the kingdom, and we are given these chapters in the Book of Ezekiel, beginning at chapter 40 through chapter 46. Wouldn’t it be nice if you didn’t have to leave this meeting in about 4 minutes or 5 minutes, and we could just stay here and we could read all of these chapters, because I have a hunch you didn’t read them before this meeting?

These chapters in Ezekiel give us a picture which has puzzled Biblical interpreters for a long time. Now, it has puzzled all of the Biblical interpreters. It does not only puzzle the premillennialists, but it has puzzled the amillennialists because they don’t have

any exegesis for these chapters either. They criticize our exegesis of them, but when you say to them, what’s yours?, they say, well we don’t really understand this too well, but we know it’s not what you say it is [laughter].

Now, in these chapters we have a picture of a temple, and we have a picture of worship. And the worship involves a temple and sacrifices, animal sacrifices. Now, the context of this temple and sacrifices, evidently on the surface is of the future. But how is it possible to have animal sacrifices again? The amillennialists say, don’t you know that in the New Testament we are taught as plainly as it is possible for anything to be taught, read Hebrews chapter 7 verse 27, read Hebrews chapter 9 verse 12 and verse 26, that the coming of the Lord Jesus was the fulfillment of all the sacrifices. Are we not taught there that the sacrificial system has been done away with? And now you are suggesting that during the time of the kingdom of God upon the earth, we’re going to have a temple and we’re going to have the reinstatement of sacrifices, animal sacrifices. Well, on the surface, that’s ridiculous.

Now, we don’t have time to deal with all of the questions that arise out of this. I just merely want to suggest a solution to you. These sacrifices, which are set forth in these chapters, and I grant that they’re difficult to interpret; they are probably retrospective and commemorative in their form. That is, they are sacrifices that look for that that Jesus Christ has done in the past, and they commemorate what he has done in the past. They are not sacrifices which are accomplished in order to remove sin in the sense that the Old Testament sacrifices covered sin. Actually, the sacrifices never took away sins at all. But, they are designed to be commemorated.

Now, since the worship is going to be the worship of Israelites, it’s not totally inconceivable to think that God during the millennium would set up in the temple in Jerusalem a system of worship by which Israel did sacrifice animals not to have their sins forgiven for the lamb of God has come once and for all, and they are forgiven, but to commemorate what he did thousands of years ago at the time of the cross. Just as we

today, every Sunday night in this auditorium and in the parlor across the way, sit down at the Lord’s table and take the elements in token of the fact, in memory of the fact, that the Lord Jesus has died for us.

Now, since Israel was a nation that was under the sacrificial system for hundreds of years, it seems to me quite fitting that God should give them a memorial service which reminded them of their years of Old Testament relationship to God by which they remember what our Lord Jesus has done. So I do not find that totally impossible to believe. I do not think that it is inconceivable that God should reinstitute sacrifices as memorials of what Christ has done. But, I’m not so certain of that, that I would not like to have a fuller explanation, perhaps, of it.

Now, very quickly, these last three points are points that I’ve already touched upon. The physical aspects of the kingdom, the blessings that are to come to pass upon the land, over the whole of the earth are physical. They touch the people, and they touch the animals. You can put down Isaiah Chapter 35 verse 1 through verse 7 here. And then under Romans 6 we have the economic aspects of the kingdom, and what is promised in the Old Testament Scriptures is that there shall be general prosperity and abundance upon the earth, and even the Russian Christians will have grain during the time of the millennium.

And the passage that I suggest that you put down there is Amos chapter 9 verse 13 through verse 14, also Jeremiah chapter 31 in verse 12, and finally Romans 7. The social aspects of the kingdom involve, firmly, social justice. There shall be equal treatment of all. The poor shall not be exploited for we have a just king reigning in Jerusalem, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I suggest that you put down Isaiah chapter 65 verse 21 and 22 and Psalm 72 verse 4 and verse 12 through verse 14.

[Prayer] Let’s bow in a word of prayer. We are thankful to Thee, Lord, for the privilege of the study of Holy Scripture. And, O God, if there is someone here who has

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not yet believed in Jesus Christ, we do pray that through the Holy Spirit they may be brought to the knowledge of him who shed his blood that men might be saved.

For his name’s sake. Amen.