



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

“The Last Adam and His Kingdom – IV”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the word of God which is a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path. We thank Thee for the way in which Thou hast made provision for us as those who have been created by Thee and down through the years have been made to multiply upon the face of this earth. We thank Thee for the gifts of the Scriptures, the gift of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the living word of God, the gift of the Holy Spirit who has come as sent by the Father and the Son to indwell those who have believed in Him. We thank Thee for the guidance that he gives day by day. We thank Thee for all that he has accomplished in welding us together into one body of believers, the church of Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the hopes that we have.

We look forward to the coming again of our Lord Jesus Christ. We especially look forward to the ages of eternity in which we serve Thee, see Thy face, and enjoy the things that Thou hast accomplished for us and will accomplish through us throughout eternity. We thank Thee for these who are here. We pray Thy blessing upon them, upon their families. And we pray, Lord, for the concerns that all of us have. We ask Thy blessing upon each one of us. We pray for those who've asked the people of Believer's Chapel to pray for them and we remember them and ask that Thou wilt minister to them in

accordance with Thy will and give positive, affirmative answers in accordance with Thy will. And we pray that Thou wilt sustain those who are suffering in various ways. We commit them to Thee. We ask now for Thy blessing upon us as we study together.

In Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Now, for those of you who have been listening for the past three of our sessions, you know that we have been studying 1 Corinthians 15, verse 20 through verse 28, devoting three hours to these verses because they are generally regarded as extremely important, and I certainly regard them as extremely important. And so we have, in measure, at least reflected upon these important verses, but there is one point that we have not really centered attention upon, and I’d like to do that this evening. It’s the kind of thing that a Bible student would be interested in, but the average person would not. I’m quite sure what I’m going to say to you tonight will not be nearly as interesting to you as the things that are happening in Los Angeles in the trial of O.J. Simpson. But in one sense they may be much more important. At least they are things that have to do with God’s word.

To ask the question about the millennium, of course, is a Biblical question because we do have reference to the thousand years in the Book of Revelation. We have many passages in the Old Testament that talk about the kingdom of God. Daniel tells us a great deal about the kingdom of God that is to be upon the earth that is brought by God himself. And so these questions are discussed by those who study the word of God, both theologians who study in our schools and those in the ordinary walks of life who read the Bible. What I’m going to say tonight will not be of general interest among Christians because there are many Christians who are not interested at all in the prophetic word. That’s a rather strange thing because, actually, everything in the Bible at one point was eschatological. And so it seems strange for someone to say I’m not interested in prophecy when the whole of the Bible at one point or another was prophetic. From the

time of the first promise in the Garden of Eden, we have the prophetic word. And yet recently I’ve had several, who are knowledgeable students of the Bible, make offhand remarks to the effect that eschatology is not really all that important and even speak of some who spend too much time in eschatology. That’s probably true. But nevertheless, the idea of the prophetic word not being significant is something that cannot be squared with simply reading the Bible.

It appears at times it’s a defensive kind of remark so that the discussions of prophecy, which are not as certain as some of the things in theology, are avoided. And so this evening we are going to talk about something that is not the common speech of the average person who attends a professing Christian church. In fact, I wonder if this message is one that really ought to be broadcast if it’s broadcast in the series as some of the others have been. The Epistle to the Hebrews were studies being broadcast now that were given here on Wednesday evening, and it’s possible that this series may be broadcast in the future. But this is one message I would wonder about whether it would be the kind of message that the average person who might tune in, might be attracted to.

So in that sense, you are having something a little special and it’s designed for you. I hope at least I can maintain your interest.

This is the fourth then in our series of studies called the “The Last Adam and His Kingdom.” This present passage then raises the question of Millennialism, or to put it in another phrase, the earthly kingdom of God. Is that a Biblical hope? Is it the teaching of Scripture that there is to be an earthly kingdom of God over which our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will reign?

We have in theology terms to describe the problem or the question terms like premillennialism, postmillennialism, and amillennialism. These terms are terms that have to do with the coming of our Lord as it may relate to a kingdom of God upon the earth following his coming. For example, premillennialism is a term made up from the Latin word -- founded upon the Latin word “mille” and the word “annus” – a thousand years.

“Pre,” of course, is the prefix that means before. So premillennialism is the doctrine that our Lord returns before the thousand-year kingdom upon the earth. He will return, will establish the kingdom of God upon the earth at his return, and then rule and reign on the earth for one thousand years.

Postmillennialism, as you might expect since the prefix “post” means after -- these are Latin terms, that post millennium, postmillennialism maintains that our Lord will return after the thousand-year reign upon the earth. One might ask well how will the thousand-year reign upon the earth originate then, if it is not brought by our Lord himself in his coming? Well, the views of postmillennialists are not all similar, but, generally speaking, they have believed that the preaching of the gospel would be so fruitful that ultimately we would ourselves reach a state through the preaching of the gospel that the kingdom of God would come into existence upon the earth, and then at the conclusion of the reign -- the conclusion of kingdom of a thousand years, then our Lord would return.

That was very popular in the days in which men thought of human history as being an advance from that as rough and antiqued to that which is great and optimistic. It fit in very well with the optimistic philosophy of many of the philosophers at one time. And so postmillennialism was very popular, but it is not very popular now, particularly in the twentieth century since our history has been characterized by such severe worldwide conflicts, such as World War I, World War II.

Amillennialism is an expression that probably is to be traced back to Augustine who began his ministry as a premillennialist, but then, because of the excesses of some of the premillennialists who made a great deal over the kind of life that they thought the kingdom of God upon the earth would be, made premillennialism something that was unfavorable to men like Augustine. And so he moved from being a premillennialist to an amillennialist or to believing that there would not be a kingdom of God upon the earth at all.

The alpha privative is a letter in the Greek language that negates what follows. We have it in English. We have Gnostics are those who know certain things. Agnostics are those who affirm they do not know. So amillennialism is the view that there is not going to be a kingdom of God upon the earth at all. These views are held by different people. There are those who might be called Evangelicals, who believe the Bible, who fall into all of these categories. There are premillennial Evangelicals. There are postmillennial Evangelicals, not very many now but nevertheless they have been. And there are amillennial Evangelicals, so that these terms are terms that refer to Christian professors of the faith.

Now, the question, Was Paul a premillennialist?, is the question that we want to try to answer this evening. There are different ways in which we can answer it. We can say he was not. We can say he was. Or we can say we are not sure what he was because he doesn’t really say anything really specifically that may be addressed to the point.

John was a bit different. John wrote the Book of Revelation, and he mentions the thousand-year kingdom. As a matter of fact, he mentions it six times, the thousand years, in Revelation chapter 20. People like to say occasionally; oh, it’s only mentioned one place in the Bible. Yes, that is true, the term limit a thousand years, the kingdom is all through the Bible, an earthly kingdom, apparently all through the Old Testament. And so it’s not correct to say, the kingdom of God upon the earth is only mentioned in one place. But the length of it is mentioned in only one place, Revelation chapter 20. There however, it’s mentioned -- well the thousand-year period is mentioned six times within the six verses of the 20th chapter.

So the question then that we are addressing is, Was Paul a premillennialist? And this passage that we are looking at which we have looked at for three of our Wednesday nights is one that is one of the key passages in answering that particular question. Excellent theologians who are of the highest excellency, that is they are Calvinists, have affirmed that Paul was not a premillennialist. For example, let’s take one or two of them,

two of the greatest, B. B. Warfield claimed that Paul and the New Testament agree and summed up the teaching of the millennium in the Apocalypse by saying John knows no more of two resurrections. The resurrection of the saints and of the wicked than does Paul. And the whole theory of an intervening millennium and indeed of a millennium of any kind on earth goes up in smoke. We are forced indeed to add our ascent to Kliefoths, now Kliefoths is a German theologian, Kliefoths’ conclusion that “The doctrine of a thousand-year kingdom has no foundation in the prophecies of the New Testament and is therefore not a dogma but merely a hypothesis lacking all Biblical ground. The millennium of the apocalypse is the blessedness of the saints who have gone away from the body to be at home with the Lord.”

In other words, they’re enjoying a millennium at the present time, those who have died and have gone home to be with the Lord. The millennium is not an earthly kingdom; the millennium is the enjoyment of the presence of God in heaven. The thousand years is a figurative term simply speaking of a lengthy period of time.

Well, Professor Warfield was one of the greatest of the Christian theologians of the twentieth century, no question of that. And I certainly have admired him very much. I have taught courses that have to do with Warfield, that is, courses on Warfield’s theology. And so I regard him highly. I think he is very important. There are many things that you could profit from if you read B.B. Warfield. But, of course, you know enough to know that a man may be an expositor of the Scriptures and yet make some egregious errors. You have the living illustration before you. And probably behind my back you say, I don’t agree with him about that. That was a strange thing for him to say. In fact, it doesn’t seem to make any sense at all. So Bible teachers and theologians are not, of course, without their errors.

Another of the great twentieth century theologians was a Dutch theologian who taught at Princeton University, Geerhardus Vos. Professor Vos was professor of Biblical theology at Princeton Theological Seminary in the earlier part of the century. He’s highly

regarded at Westminster Seminary, even today. And he has said much the same things as Warfield. He said it must be admitted, however, that the likelihood of finding chiliasm -- now that is another term for millennium, but it’s based not upon the Latin word mille which means a thousand, but the Greek term “chilioi” which means a thousand, so that millennialism is a term that means -- or millennium, a thousand year period of time according to Latin derivation. Chiliasm is a term that refers to the thousand years, but the Greek word is used as the base of it. So he’s using the term chiliasm.

The likelihood of finding chiliasm in Paul is not favored by the trend of the apostle’s teaching as a whole. He says the larger Pauline mold is not to be reduced to the narrower apocalyptic vision. Further, chiliasm is characterized by -- these are Vos’s words now -- a reckless abuse of the fundamental principles of Old Testament Exegesis, unquote. He says the Old Testament itself already points to the spiritualizing of most of the things in question.

Spiritualizing is not what we would call typology, but spiritualizing is the transformation of a term into something that is different. For example, the prophecies of the Old Testament in which the term Israel is mentioned, a reference to, of course, the twelve tribes. That term in the New Testament has come to be, and later on even in the Old Testament, but particularly in the New Testament, has come to be a reference to the church. So the church is Israel, and Israel is the church.

Now, we are exposed to this because if you’ll open up your hymn books and sing some of those hymns, you will have that theology right there in your hymns. Marching to Zion and things like this are ways in which that kind of thinking, hermeneutical thinking, has invaded our hymns. And some of the greatest of the hymns with marvelous stanzas at the same time are hymns that were written by men who probably, without thinking too much -- hymn writers are not theologians. Dr. Chafey used to say something like hymn writers, he himself was a hymn writer, would get to heaven so as by fire. But because

their language often is not totally in harmony with the Bible, but it sounds sweet and nice anyway.

Well, we have the spiritualizing, Vos says, of most of the things in question. And he complains that the term chiliasm, that is the millennium, is unaptly chosen since this period of time might have been six hundred or four hundred years. That is, the duration of the interval of the thousand years referred to in the Book of Revelation. I’ve found that a most interesting thing that he is objecting to the use of the term one thousand because is it not the Apostle John who has spoken so unaptly as to use the term one thousand years?

Finally Vos says that the -- now this is something that is amazing. Vos says that the present Christian state -- now, mind you, he lived in the earlier part of our century, the present state -- the present Christian state is, quote, “lived on so high a plain that nothing less nor lower than the absolute state of the eternal consummate kingdom appears worthy to be its sequel.”

In other words, the plain of our life is so marvelous from the standpoint of holiness that we cannot conceive of anything greater than our present state of living except the eternal state. That is astonishing. That’s the comment of a man who doesn’t really understand much about what is going on in society. Now, of course, Vos lived in the earlier part of this century. I think if Vos looked at our society now, he would say I take that back. [Laughter] Because it’s obvious that our society is the kind of society in which it is very easy to imagine a kind of society that would be on a higher plain. And surely the kingdom of God upon the earth, even if it’s only for a thousand years preceding the eternal state, would be an advance.

So these are some of the things that have been said, and so we are going now to try to deal with the question of the contribution of 1 Corinthians 15 to this question of the millennium. One of the New Testament interpreters has called 1 Corinthians 15 the Christian apocalypse. I made reference to that in one of the earlier studies, and so we are

not going to look at it again. I am just going to summarize some of the things that we have been talking about, and then deal specifically with the question of was Paul a premillennialist or in what way was Paul related to that question.

Now, in verse -- let’s read through verse 20 through verse 28 again, so we’ll have this in mind. The apostle writes -- he’s talking in the chapter on the resurrection and so he says,

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming. Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy *that* will be destroyed *is* death. For ‘*He has put* -- (he’s citing some passages from Scripture here, weaving them into his text.) -- For ‘*He has put all things under His feet.*’ (You’ll remember that’s from Psalms 110)¹ But when He says ‘all things are put under *Him,*’ *it is* evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.”

Now, just to summarize what we have been talking about, in verse 20 through verse 22, he has been talking about the fact and the figure of the resurrection. He’s just said in the preceding paragraph how terrible it would be if our Lord had not been raised from the dead. Verse 14, “If Christ is not risen then our preaching is empty, and your faith is also empty.” That is, it has no content. There’s no reality there if our Lord has not been raised from the dead because the resurrection is part of our gospel. If he has not been raised from the dead, we are just using a word. It doesn’t refer to any event.

And then in verse 17, “And if Christ is not risen your faith is futile,” a different word. Futile, you are still in your sins. Now, what we expect when we think of our Lord’s death, burial, and resurrection is that this work, this saving work of dying for the sins of sinners, will bring us life. But if he is not been raised from the dead, then to put faith in him is futile. Your faith doesn’t do what you thought it would do. It does not bring you the forgiveness of sins. That’s his point.

So now in verse 20, there is a kind of joyous outburst on the part of the apostle, and he says, “But now Christ has been raised from the dead.” In other words, in contrast to the dreary picture that I have just presented of an empty faith and a futile faith, we as believers can say Christ has been risen, has been raised from the dead, and, therefore, our faith is not empty, it’s grounded in a historical fact, and it does what it is supposed to do. It is the means by which we are delivered from our sins. So it’s quite a joyous outburst. It’s the cry, as someone has put it, of deliverance after the nightmare of no resurrection presented in the preceding verses.

Now, the apostle when he says that our Lord has been raised from the dead, he used the firstfruits, remember, as his figure and refers to the Feast of Firstfruits, one of Israel’s feasts, when at the fall of the year the harvest at the harvest time the barley sheaves would be cut, a few of them, brought in and waved before the Lord, and thus the barley festival began in celebration of what God had done for them. Paul calls our Lord the firstfruits of those who have been raised from the dead.

Now, those sheaves of the barley harvest had two characteristics that are similar to our Lord’s position with reference to us. In the first place, they were the earnest of what was to come. In other words, when they cut the sheaves, brought them in, waved them before the Lord, it was the conviction of all, there were many more out in the field, and they would have the harvest in the time of the harvest that had just begun. But furthermore, those sheaves that were waved before the Lord were taken from the same field that the other sheaves would be taken, and so we can say that those sheaves

represented an earnest of what was to come, the guarantee, and also that they were like what was to come.

Now, to use the figure of our Lord, the fact of his resurrection from the dead, since he represents you and me, then we can say, according to Paul’s use of the figure, that since he has been raised that’s the guarantee that we will be raised, for he is the one who has acted for us. He’s the firstfruits. He’s not the whole harvest. He’s the firstfruits. And, secondly, we can argue that in the light of the use of the figure, we are not simply sure to experience resurrection, but we are to have a resurrection like his resurrection. In other words, the sheaves were in earnest, and they were a sample of what was out in the field.

And we know that Scripture goes on to say that at the resurrection we shall be given a body like unto his own glorious body. No wonder that the apostle expresses in this joyous outburst of faith in the resurrection, but now Christ has been raised from the dead. We are sure to be raised from the dead, and we are to have that body that has been promised to us because he has acted for us.

What’s the underlying rationale of this? Well, I’m sure you already know, if you’ve been thinking at all. Now, if you’ve been thinking about the trial in Los Angeles, then you may have missed the point. But if we say that he has acted for us, what are we really saying? Well, we are saying that our Lord is, to put it in theological language, he’s the covenantal head of the people of God. He stands for us. He is the mediator for us. And so Paul’s point is simply, what we’ve been saying over and over again, since man has sinned, it’s for man to repair the damage that man has done. I’ve quoted three or four times, I know you’ll remember it, one of the French commentator’s statements, It’s from man to repair the evil done by man.

So the underlying rationale is that our Lord is our representative. He’s our mediator. He’s our covenantal head, and what he does he does for those who are in Him. That’s part of the grace of God that we, His people, are reckoned to have done what he has done and so when he bores sin, he bores sin for us. When He said, “My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me,” he was bearing my sin. If you’re a believing person. If you are one of God’s elect people, he was bearing your sin. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? He was bearing the sins of those for whom he does his work. That’s the story of the Bible. If you cannot believe that, you cannot really believe the most important fact in all of the Bible, that our Lord is our covenantal redeemer.

So he goes on to say, “For since by man came death, by man came the resurrection of the dead, for as in Adam all die even so in Christ shall be made alive.” So in Adam all die; in the last Adam, men live. It’s -- the Biblical plan is so simple. I wish I could at this point stop and for one hour, cause it would take one hour, talk to you about covenantal representation, but you can find it. It’s in the tape ministry. There is a series called “The Eight Most Important Doctrines in the Bible,” and I devoted one whole time to why this is the finest way by which God could possibly have dealt with men, covenantal representation, answering the questions that people have raised with reference to it.

Now, Paul goes on to say in verse 23, but each in his own order, still talking about the resurrection. Each in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at his coming.

In other words, all who are in Christ are going to be raised, but there is an order in the resurrection. Christ, the firstfruits, afterward, those who are Christ’s at this coming. The two stages set forth by Paul in the order. So important point here is to note that there is a time difference between for each in his own order, Christ, the firstfruits, then those who are Christ’s at this coming. Now, he hasn’t come yet. This is the year nineteen hundred and ninety-five. So we are coming close to two thousand years that are comprehended by the expression afterward. That’s interesting, isn’t it? In the Greek text it’s simply “then.” That’s all. Let me read it that way, “Each in his order, Christ the firstfruits, then those who are Christ’s at his coming. Almost two thousand years represented by one little adverb, “eita,” in this case then. So that word is significant. It

spans almost two thousand years. It may span a little more. I’m not going to prophesy the end of it, of course. I don’t know, but it has comprehended that much so far.

Now, the consummation of the program is described in verse 24 through 28. And Paul begins verse 24 by saying, then comes the end. Now, that is rather significant. We have first Christ, then those who are Christ’s at this coming, then comes the end. Now, that’s interesting because what we have here is a use of expressions that are very closely related. I’ll just turn to the Greek text. And in verse 23 we read, “And each in his own tagma, or order, firstfruits, Christ, then, epeita, those who are Christ’s at his coming, and then the related word from which epeita is constructed, eita. You can see epeita, eita. They both mean essentially the same thing. So he says, then those who are Christ’s at this coming, then comes the end.

Now, would it be -- would it be out of the possibility of accomplishment that we should say, since the first then has comprehended almost two thousand years, that the next then might comprehend a thousand years? Well, surely, we would have to agree, yes. If the first “then” comprehends we know so far close to two thousand years, it’s entirely possible for the next then one epeita, one is the preposition epe connected with the adverb eita. And then eita very closely related epeita, eita -- see you people know Greek already then. You know those expressions. So it’s not beyond our comprehension at all, in fact, we might expect something like that. But we are not allowed to do that, just as a supposition.

But now in verse 24 then, then comes the end. Now, we have talked about this, so I can’t go into all of this again. When he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, now I’m going to render it a little differently because we’ve given the argumentation for it. You can find it in the Greek commentaries, when he shall have delivered the kingdom to God the Father, when -- you can translate that, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father -- when he shall have put an end to all rule and all authority and power.

In other words, it’s necessary for him to put an end to all rule, authority, and power before he delivers the kingdom to the Father. That’s very plain.

So when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father or when he shall there, but when he delivers, when he shall have put an end to all rule and authority and power. Well, what is this putting an end to all rule and power? Well, Paul explains, For he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.

So having said that then, he goes on to say, the last enemy that will be destroyed is death, for he has put all things under his feet. Now, he’s citing Scripture here, so those who know Scripture could follow him, those who don’t know Scripture couldn’t follow him. Those that were thinking about the Trial of Socrates, except that was a few centuries before Paul, thinking about the things that were happening in Paul’s day in the first century, they had missed the whole thing. But those who are familiar with the Bible, they would be able to follow along, for -- to quote Scripture, you could put quotes here -- “He has put all things under his feet.” But when he says all things are put under him, it’s evident that he who put all things under him is excepted. That is, we said this is a reference to God, obviously the Father, God the Father. So when God the son accomplishes his work of bringing all things in subjection to God the Father, then he puts -- he gives the kingdom back to God the Father. It’s evident that he who put all things under him is excepted. Obviously, if the Son is carrying out the mission of the Father to bring everything into subjection to the Godhead, then clearly, when the Son has finished His work of bringing everything in subjection -- obviously the Father is excepted because he’s the one who gave the Son the mission, and so that’s what Paul means. It’s evident that he who put all things under him is excepted. Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him that God -- not the Father -- that God might be all in all -- the Godhead, God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit. Remember our God is a Triune God. God is the term that refers to the Father, the Son, and the Spirit.

Now, it is true from certain passages, we know that one of the members of the Godhead may be prominent in the activity that is described there. There are certain things that the Father does, basically. There are certain things the Son does basically. There are certain things the Holy Spirit does, basically. The Father is the initiator of the actions, the Son is the mediator, and the Spirit is the one who applies the truth to the individuals who are the end of the purposes of God. So when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son himself will be subject to Him who put all things under Him.

Now, we made the point in verse 25, “For he must reign till he has put all enemies under His feet,” that evidently the reign takes time. Because it is written in a tense for he must go on reigning until he has put all enemies under his feet. In other words, the reign of our Lord is a time of war or possible war, put it that way.

Now, the passages that he uses in explaining all of this are Psalm 110, verse 1 and Psalm 8. Now, it’s important for me to read a few verses at this point, and it’s important for you to read them. So I’m going to ask you, if you will, to turn to Psalm 110. I’ll just read one verse from Psalm 110. This is a psalm that describes the conflict and a successful conclusion, we can say that much. The first verse of it is a verse that is quoted more than any other verse in the New Testament, that means we ought to truly understand this psalm in its broad outlines. Listen to what we read.

“The LORD said to my Lord, (David is speaking) ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” Then he describes a struggle and he describes a successful conclusion to it. “The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’”

Now, Psalm 8. Psalm 8 is the psalm that describes the creation and the things that God did in the creation lyrically. That is, the psalmist talks about the creation in poetry, Hebrew poetry. Psalm 8,

“O LORD, our Lord, How excellent *is* Your name in all the earth, you who have set Your glory above the heavens! Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have ordained strength, because of Your enemies, that You may silence the enemy and the avenger.

When I consider Your heavens, the work of Your fingers, The moon and the stars, which You have ordained, What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor.

You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands.” (Man made to be a ruler. That’s what Adam was. He was king of the earth for a while). “You have put all things under his feet. All sheep and oxen, even the beasts of the field, the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea that pass through the paths of the seas.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Your name in all the earth!”

These two passages make use of Psalm 110 and Psalm 8, in the same order here, and in Hebrews. I’m talking about the 1 Corinthians 15 and Hebrews, these two passages makes similar use of Psalm 110 and Psalm 8 in the same order. Here in Hebrews and in 1 Corinthians. Both speak of a reign of Christ, but this is important, both locate the reign of Christ in the future after the Parousia. We have it here in 1 Corinthians where he says then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father when he shall have put all an end to all rule and authority and power for he must go on reigning until he has put all enemies under his feet. In other words, both located in the future after the Parousia. Is this not compatible with a millennium? At least we can say it’s compatible with a millennium.

Now in verse 27 and verse 28, he puts them all together, cites the two passages and concludes with the kingdom turned over to the Father. So Psalm 8 encompasses, we might say, the death of death.

Now, I’m going to ask you to take a look now at Epistle to the Hebrews in chapter 2 in verse 8. Be sure I get through what I want to say tonight. There is so much that could be said.

Now, in Hebrews chapter 1 in verse 13 in speaking of the Son the writer has said, *But to which of the angels has He ever said: ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool?’* Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who shall inherit salvation? So it’s the Son who is to be the one to whom all things are to be brought into subjugation. Now, notice verse 5 -- that was Psalm 110. Verse 5 of chapter 2 of Hebrews, “For he has not put the world to come of which we speak in the subjection to the angels.” He’s showing the superiority of the Son. “But one testified in a certain place saying what is this man that you are mindful of Him or the Son of man that you take care of him. You’ve made him a little more than the angels, you have crowned him with glory and with honor, set him over the works of your hands, you put all things in subjection under his feet for in that he put all in subjection under him.” He has left nothing that is not put under him but now we do not see yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, now it’s obvious what he is simply saying is if you look out at the creation, it’s ultimately to be under man, but at the present time it is not under man. Now, as we look around it’s not in subjection yet to him. But we see Jesus, why should that give us encouragement? Well, because he is the covenantal head, and what he has done is a guarantee that these things are going to come to pass. So the consummation reached in 15 -- 1 Corinthians 15, verse 27 and 28, encompasses the death of death.

John Owen wrote a great book -- well, it’s really part of his works not, but it was a great book called, “The Death of Death and the Death of Christ.” And that, of course,

expresses what is the important part of our Lord’s work. But now I want to review the claims of the millennialists, and then we will look at the premillennialists.

The claims of the amillennialists first. The amillennialists claim that hostile powers have been conquered by the cross through the present reign of our Lord in heaven, that he’s reigning now, the kingdom is then delivered to the Father by the Son at the Second Advent, and the end comes with the destruction of death. The key question is: What is the destruction of death, and when does it take place? Well, amillennialists -- and they have a point here. We don’t think they are without arguments. They have a point here. They will say in 1 Corinthians 15 later on in the chapter it goes on to talk about the coming of our Lord, and we know of course this is true. And in verse 50 through 58, we have that which has to do with the defeat of death and in fact its specifically stated in verse 55, “Oh death where is your sting, or Hades where is your victory? The sting of death is sin. The strength of the sin is law, but thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

So our Lord is reigning now, the kingdom is now, and death comes at the Second Advent, that’s when death experiences death. The Lord’s reigning now, therefore, how can there be a kingdom, a millennial kingdom with death then and also later? In other words, if he is reigning now and if death is defeated at his second advent, then how can there be reign for a thousand years after death has been defeated? That’s a pretty good argument, isn’t it? Pretty good argument, if that’s all you said. I think I would win the argument with a lot of my friends. They’d say, Well, that’s pretty good. It may overlook - I say may because I don’t believe that I have the answer to every Biblical question. I really don’t believe, though I kid you at times, I have most answers to most of the questions, I don’t really believe that either. The Bible is too big a book for the average man, and I’ve lived a long time and I’m still -- I consider myself still a student of the Bible. In fact, that is what I do most of the time, student of the Bible. I sit at my desk and ponder and say often, I wish I had known this 50 years ago, but I didn’t.

So -- but let me just ask you one question. Is not 1 Corinthians 15 a chapter about believers? Almost everybody agrees with that. This is a chapter about believers. Is not then 1 Corinthians 15:50 through 58 concerned with the defeat of death for believers since the entire chapter concerns believers? From the beginning we’ve made that point. Back in the earlier part of the chapter, in verse 23 -- well, really before then, verse 21. Since by man came death, by man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die even so in Christ all shall be made alive. And we made the point that “all” is all who are in Christ. Not everyone, all in Christ. This passage doesn’t teach universalism. It doesn’t teach universal resurrection. It teaches universal resurrection of those who are in Christ. It has to do with believers. We’ve made that point. So I suggest to you then that 1 Corinthians 15:50 through 58 is concerned with the defeat of death for believers, but not the final destruction of death. For the Book of Revelations goes on to talk about death and Hades being cast into the Lake of Fire.

Now, what do premillennialists contend? They contend for two resurrections, not one. Based upon Revelation chapter 20 in which the first resurrection is used and another resurrection is referred to. And so they turned the Scripture and say there are two resurrections. And John chapter 20, verse 4 through 6 make that point. Everybody has to agree that it does have two resurrections there.

So the sequence then, when in 1 Corinthians 15 in verse 24 when Paul says, Then comes the end. Now, we have had each in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, afterwards those who are Christ’s at his coming, then comes the end, then it would seem that the sequence here indicates that the end cannot be simultaneous with the coming. Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and all power. Then cannot be simultaneous with his coming.

So there must then be a period of time after the then. Then comes the end when he delivers the kingdom to the Father. So each in his own order, Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at his coming. Then comes the end, then, end cannot be

simultaneous with his coming. There must be another time period there. Is there anything in 1 Corinthians that suggests that the apostle may have had this in mind? A kingdom of God upon the earth? Well, take a look back at chapter 4 in verse 8. The apostle is talking to the Corinthians and he says to them -- because he is not happy with the way they have been living. Verse 7,

“For who makes you differ from another? What do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? You are already full. You are already rich. You have reigned as kings without us.”

In other words he is suggesting to them the kind of life they are living suggests that they think they are already in the kingdom. You have reigned as kings without us and indeed I could wish you did reign that we might also reign with you. In other words, the apostle acknowledges here that there will be such a thing as a kingdom suggested by what he says, that he wishes it was so he could be reigning with them. But they are reigning before their time. Their time is not yet come.

Now, is there anything else that suggests that the time of bringing all things in subjection lies in the future? Well, I have about two minutes. I want you to turn to Hebrews chapter 2, and we will look at something there. Just a couple of verses to show that the reign of Christ and the conquest of the enemies is future. The mediatorial reign of the Son is future. Notice verse 5, “For he has not put the world to come of which we speak in subjection to angels.” Verse 8, “You have put all things in subjection under his feet,” citing the psalm, “for in that he put in subjection under him -- all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him but now -- but now, we do not yet see all things put under him.” Now, not yet all things under him.

So this age is the age in which there is no subordination to the Son. Amillennialists, it’s the age in which things are being brought in subjection. But to the

premillennialists who use these passages of Scripture, it’s evident that the present age is an age in which things are not in subjection under the Son. Furthermore, he has called this the age to come, has he not? Let’s see. He has not put the world to come of which we speak in subjection to angels. In other words, the world that is to be put into subjection is the world to come. Not the present world, the world to come, which lets us know that at least that amillennial argument that says Christ is bringing this world at the present time in subjection to him, is not the world of which Psalm 8 and Psalm 110 speak. So he has not put the world to come.

Now, incidentally the term world here is not the word “kosmos,” the term “world” is the word oikoumene. Oikoumene is the inhabited world. This is the term used in Acts chapter 17, for instance, when it states that God has given assurance that he’s going to judge all men in that he has raised Christ from the dead. So the inhabited world to come has not been put in subjection under the Son during this time. That is something that awaits the future, but now we do not yet see all things as having been put under him. That is for the world that is to come, as he says it.

Now, I would like to conclude by simply saying this, 1 Corinthians, as far as I can tell, does not deny a kingdom of God upon the earth. It has been thought that this passage denies it. I think we can see it does not deny it. This is what the Germans have called a Zwischenreich, that is an in-between kingdom. And so far as I can tell, 1 Corinthians does not deny an in between kingdom, the kingdom of the thousand years. Schweitzer, Leitzmann, other German scholars contended that. Paul is unconcerned to tell us everything he knows about his subject. He doesn’t discuss the details about the millennial kingdom in 1 Corinthians 15. As a matter of fact, there are other passages that say a great deal more about it, the whole Old Testament flow of the prophecies. And in the New Testament numbers of particular passages, but Revelation chapter 20 and the chapter of the Book of Revelation, those are the great passages on the kingdom of God upon the earth. What I can say, I think, with reasonable certainty is that the Apostle Paul

does not say anything contrary to a kingdom of God upon the earth. He doesn’t say enough to say -- for us to say Paul was a premillennialist. That may be found in other passages. It’s not easy to see because Paul was concerned about other things, but at least we can say that he doesn’t deny that, and, in fact, he seems to imply it when he criticizes the Corinthians for living as if they thought they were already in the kingdom reigning as kings in their disobedience to the word of God. That’s as far as we can go.

Let’s have a word of prayer and close.

[Prayer] Father, we are grateful to Thee for the ministry of the word of God, and we acknowledge, Lord, that the Bible is a book that is ultimately beyond our understanding. The Holy Spirit is our teacher. We look to him to teach us. We pray that he may teach us concerning the simple as well as the deeper things of the word of God. May he teach us, Lord, the important things. And we believe that the prophetic word is an important part of the word of God, and we pray that he may teach us more concerning the things that are surely to come to pass upon the earth. We know that this present world, this present inhabited world has not yet been made subject to the Son of God. We look forward to the completion of this age and then for his reign during which he will bring all things into subjection. And as the king over all, deliver up the mediatorial king to the Father, that God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit may be all in all.

We thank Thee for our hope in Christ. And, Lord, if there should be someone in this audience who does not yet have a hope of eternal life, point their mind and heart to the blood that was shed on Calvary’s cross for sinners at this very moment, cause them to receive as a free gift what they so desperately need, though they may not even realize it, the forgiveness of sins which he has wrought for us.

We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.