



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 20: 4-6

"The Millennial Kingdom of Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We are turning to Revelation 20, verse 4 through verse 6, and this passage is the subject of the exposition today. I am very sorry that we have to handle this in only one hour, of course we don't have to, but it, for all this considered, probably is better than spending a lengthy time on it. And for the reason that it's not an easy passage, and a lot of controversy has raged around it, and to try to solve the problems in thirty-five or forty minutes is impossible. I hope you will realize that.

Many of my friends stand on the other side of the particular issue that we are to talk about. I respect them. I hope they respect us who hold a different viewpoint. I think the important thing is that you read the Scriptures and seek to understand them for yourself and don't give up without doing just that. I also, as a result of that, will have to eliminate the illustrations and other things that help to characterize a message for the general public. In other words, you won't have a few moments in which you can relax, and we'll try to get through it by doing that. For those of you who find it very difficult to follow along, I hope that enough is said to make you go to the Scriptures and study it for yourself, but now let's read verses 4 through 6. And we read,

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand. And they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection. Over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years."

May the Lord bless this reading of his word, and let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for Thy Word, and for the truths that are contained within it, which are so important for our lives. We thank Thee for our Lord Jesus Christ who is the central figure of the divine program, our mediator, our covenantal head, who has represented us so beautifully, successfully and completely, and has made it possible through him for us to have an acceptance with Thee that is complete and eternal.

We are grateful and thankful for the forgiveness of our sins, and for the many other blessing that go along with this including ultimate experience of the bodily resurrection, and eternal glorification. We thank Thee for this day in which we live, and for the opportunity of proclaiming the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. We pray for this church and all other churches where the word of God in truth goes forth. We pray Thy blessing upon the whole church of Christ as they listen to the word of God, and as they respond to it, both in an assembly such as this, and also in their daily lives.

We pray for our country. We ask Thy blessing upon it, and we especially remember the sick and the ill, those who've requested that we pray for them. We pray

that we may not only remember them today in these hours, but also throughout the days of the week. We commit them to Thee. We pray that Thou'lt minister to them, and give affirmative answers to their own petitions. Bless the physicians who serve them and seek to minister to them. Give them wisdom and guidance. We pray for the families as well. Commit them all to Thee, and we pray for our elders and our deacons, and the members and friends and the visitors who are here with us today. We ask Lord Thy blessing upon each of them. For Jesus' sake. Amen.

[Message] The subject for today is "The Millennial Kingdom of Christ." The dreams of Utopia are common to mankind, extending over a history from Plato's republic. Augustine's *City of God*, through Thomas Moore's *Utopia*, on to the satiric *Brave New World* of Aldous Huxley. They shall come true to, in a staggeringly surprising way. There is an Atlantis. There is an Eldorado. There are isles of the blessed, and in a word a golden age and a place found only in the coming universal earthly kingdom of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ. If we had time to read an account and a description of the days, one could turn for one of the places in the word of God to find it, in a passage like Psalms 72, verse 8 through verse 19. We don't have time to do that, so if you'll note that down, when you get home read Psalms 72 through.

Unfortunately, men have tended to equate the Kingdom of God, one of the great concepts of human existence with democracy, or the church. The achievement of democracy is of course a remarkable achievement, and it's a relatively modern thing. It's wrong for us to think of democracy as originating in Greece for the simple reason that Athens, for example, two-thirds of the citizens in Athens were slaves, and so to think that democracy originated then is not true to history. It is also true that democracy, in one sense, does illustrate the Kingdom of God in the sense that the relationship between the citizens in democracy is a relationship in which each has equal rights and privileges. That much is true, but the relationship between the citizens in a democracy and the citizens of

Kingdom of God with the head of the Kingdom of God is entirely different. The relationship that we have to a prime minister, or the relationship that we have to a President is far different from a relationship of a citizen of the Kingdom of God to God himself. In the one case, we have a weak and poor imitation or likeness, but in the other, God is an absolute sovereign. Everything is within his hands, and he exercises absolute authority. We do not have that in a democracy. We surely do not have that in a Christian church, in the sense in which the church is sometimes regarded as something like the Kingdom of God.

When I grew up and attended the presbyterian church, which was my church for almost thirty years, we were using terms that reflected a particular viewpoint eschatologically. We used the term "the kingdom." The church was the kingdom, and the things we did were done for the kingdom. The things that we did were to be means by which we brought in the kingdom. That was a reflection of a particular eschatological viewpoint. In fact, it was the reflection of a post-millennial viewpoint, and so the way in which our language itself is created within a body of believers is reflective of the theological viewpoint. Well, the idea that the voice of the people is the voice of God or *vox populi, vox dei* is an illustration. It is not true, and we should keep that, I think, in mind. The fundamental question for all of us is, as all will in some moment or two admit, what is the teaching of the word of God.

Now, over the study of the centuries on the eschatological question, for this question pertains primarily to eschatology, the church has generally come to the view point that there are three systems of eschatology that have been popular and have been taught. One is the system of post-millennialism. Post-millennialism is a term built on some Latin expressions, for example the Latin word *post* is a preposition meaning after. Millennium is built upon two words, the word *milli*, which means a thousand, and *onus* which means a year.

Now, these terms are directed toward the coming of Christ, so post-millennialism, after a thousand years, is a viewpoint that the Lord Jesus will only return after the kingdom of God upon the earth of a thousand years.

Now, you might ask, "How is that kingdom of God to come into existence?" Well, the answer is through the preaching of the gospel. The church will so preach the gospel that there will be a gradual conversion of individuals, and finally there will be a Kingdom of God upon the earth for a thousand years at the conclusion of which our Lord shall come. In other words, we accomplish through the preaching of the gospel, that which will please him and lead to his coming. It is acknowledged by post-millennialists, because I am sure you are thinking about such things as the doctrine of the tribulation, that immediately seems to precede our Lord's second coming. It is within post-millennial teaching to acknowledge that just before our Lord returns there will be significant tribulational things that will take place. In other words, after the thousand years, there will be a breakdown, but then our Lord will come. Amillennialism is another popular term to express an eschatological viewpoint. It is built upon both Greek and Latin words. Millennialism is from *milli* plus *onus* a thousand plus a year, but the little prefix *a* called in Greek the alpha privative, negates that which follows. For example, it's like the English prefix, "un". We can say someone is known, but if they are not known, we say they are unknown, and so we negate known. We can say that has been eaten, or it was eaten or that is uneaten, not eaten. "A" is like that little "un" in English, so amillennialism teaches that there will be no thousand-year Kingdom of God upon the earth, amillennialism.

Amillennialism is traceable in its ultimate sources, perhaps to a man who influenced the great Augustine, and Augustine is known as really the father of amillennialism.

Augustine became very “dis.” He was first a pre-millennialist. He became disappointed with pre-millennialism because of the expositions of some individuals who laid a great deal of stress on the carnal blessings of the millennial period, and so he spoke

about their gormandizing, which disappointed him and caused him to change his view point. You can read about it in book twenty in, I think, about chapter 7 of the City of God, one of his great treatises. He explains why he made the change. Amillennialism is generally built upon a spiritualizing of the word of God. Some amillennialists do not like the term spiritualized, but some admit that it's probably the best thing to describe something that may be better classified as allegorizing, but at any rate, a spiritualizing of the promises of the word of God. For example, the promises that are directed to the nation Israel are read in the New Testament as relating to the church of Jesus Christ because it is believed that it is proper to speak of the church as the New Israel, and thus the church inherits the promises made to ethnic Israel in the New Testament.

It is also often said, that by amillennialists, that pre-millennialism is really built upon one passage of Scripture, Revelation chapter 20, verse 4 through verse 6 that the term millennium is found only here. There is an element of truth in that. It's not built simply upon this passage. But there's the element of truth is, of course, that the term millennium is found only here in Scripture. It is found, I believe, six times in the first six verses, but nevertheless, only here is the time period stated, a thousand years. So it's true the length of the millennial period is found only here, or the length of the kingdom, but the idea of a kingdom of God upon the earth is taught from the book of Genesis all the way through the Old Testament, and then is picked up by our Lord in the New Testament so there is an element of truth in that statement, but also an element of falsehood.

But another characteristic of this view point is that generally speaking, amillennialists regard the thousand of the thousand years, and thus the thousand years to be symbolical time period, and not to be understood in any literal kind of way, or better, for I don't like the term literal anymore than anyone else because it can be misunderstood, any other normal way in which we would understand the expression "a thousand years."

Pre-millennialism the third of the eschatological approaches to the word of God is built also upon Latin. We have *milli* and *onus* for millennium, and we have the Latin prefix *pre* which means before, so in contrast to post-millennialism, which believes that the Lord will come after the thousand year kingdom upon the earth, pre-millennialists believe that the Lord will come before the thousand year kingdom, and as a matter of fact, in his Second Advent, will perform the things that bring us into the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Pre-millennialism has had several outstanding supports. First of all, it's the normal interpretation. Reading these verses, one gets the impression, as he looks over chapter 19 and 20, chapter 19 has made reference to the Second Advent of Christ, and now chapter 20 tells us about a kingdom on the earth. I say on the earth because in an earlier chapter it is specifically said with reference to the saved that they will reign on the earth. The normal reading would be in chapter 19. The Kingdom of God is following our Lord's return. He returns, and then in chapter 20 there is a kingdom, so that would be a pre-millennial system of interpretation. So it's regarded as the normal interpretation. It is the view of the early church, so far as we know.

Now, I want to qualify that. As far as we know there were no early church fathers who wrote on the topic, who were anything other than pre-millennialists for several centuries, however, one of them in writing on the subject, does acknowledge there were others and genuine Christians who didn't believe the things that they believe. Unfortunately, they never put in print what they had written, and I am going to give you a couple of illustrations of that in a moment.

A third support of pre-millennialism is fulfilled prophecy. Now, the prophecies of the Old Testament generally speaking, are fulfilled literally in the New Testament. You read the many prophecies of the Old Testament, that are fulfilled in the New, and in every case, in my opinion, in every case the fulfillment is a literal fulfillment, so that the fulfillment of prophecy is supported by pre-millennialism, and then as we shall see, the

argument of chapters 19 and 20 is, I think, supportive as well. The Old Testament covenantal promises are promises that guarantee an earthly kingdom, and here we have, I think, and explanation of how they will be fulfilled.

Now, I mentioned the fact that the early church believed in pre-millennialism, so far as we know. Justin Martyr, an early second century apologist of the Christian faith, had very definite pre-millennial views in a work he wrote called Dialogue with Trypho a Jew. Trypho asks him the question, "Do you really admit that this place Jerusalem shall be rebuilt, and do you expect your people to be gathered together and made joyful with Christ and the patriarchs and the prophets, both the men of our nation and other proselytes who join them before your Christ came?" And Justin answers Trypho and says, "I and others our of this opinion and believe that such will take place as you are assuredly aware, but on the other hand I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and powerous faith and are true Christians think otherwise." Now, these next words, I've always thought were rather cute. He said, "But I and others, who are right minded Christians on all points are assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead and a thousand years in Jerusalem which will then be rebuilt adorned and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel and Isaiah and others declare."

Arenius, who also ministered in the second century, the disciple of Polycarp, who was the disciple of the Apostle John, so that Arenius is a kind of grandson of the Apostle John, was likewise a pre-millenarian. He spoke of "the times of the kingdom" when "the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead, when also the creation having been renovated and set free shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food from the due of heaven and from the fertility of the earth." We could go on and speak of others, but our time does not permit it. Papeus is another one of the early ones, who also had relationship to the Apostle John, who taught that particular viewpoint, so when we talk about pre-millennialism, we are talking probably about the historical viewpoint of the early church. Of course, that doesn't necessarily mean that it is the viewpoint of the word

of God, but those nearest to the apostles holding that view should have some significance for us.

Now, because we don't have time to talk about all the details, let's turn to our passage, and we look at verse 4, where the apostle writes about the vision of the thrones and the saints. Now, one thing that I want you to notice, before we look specifically at one or two points here, is the logical progression of the visions that John is describing. In chapter 19 in verse 11, remember when we were expounding chapter 19 and the Second Advent of Christ, we pointed out that this is the first of seven last things that the apostle writes about.

We read in verse 11 of chapter 19, "And I saw the heaven open," and then we read of the Second Advent of Christ. Then in verse 17 we read, "And I saw an angel standing in the sun," and we read about the great supper of God. And then in 19 we read, "And I saw the beasts and the kings of the earth, and the armies assembled to make war against him who sat upon the horse and against his army," and that of course has to do essentially with the battle or the non-battle that settles the destiny of those upon the earth. Chapter 20 opens with again, "And I saw an angel coming down from heaven having the key of the abyss and the dragon is bound for a thousand years," everything is moving along in progression. Verse 4, "And I saw thrones."

Now, just simply looking at these, "And I saws," we would see that since chapter 19 talks about the second Advent of Christ, and now in chapter 20 in verse 4 we have a description of the kingdom of God upon the earth, you can see that the coming of our Lord is pre-millenarian.

Now, it has been said, but all John is doing is giving visions, which do not guarantee that the events that they describe are chronological a good point, and one that we must seek to answer. Notice, however, the 7th verse, "And when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison." So there is progression within the visions. We read then in verse 7, "When the thousand years were completed Satan will be

released from his prison," and then in verse 11, we have another, "And I saw a great white throne." And there we are taught concerning the final judgment. And finally verse 1, of chapter 21, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth." In other words, there is a progression within these, "And I saws," therefore reading normally we would come to a pre-millennial viewpoint, but let's look at the text now, specifically. John writes in verse 4, "And I saw thrones and they sat upon them."

Now, to understand who is sitting upon the throne, because their description is not given specifically other than, "And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." Incidentally, there are different ways of taking these clauses. I'm just going to go as if the one I'm giving you is correct. The point is not a major point. Since the "they" is undefined it would be normal to look back in the preceding context for the identity of the "they," and since also this section is built upon Daniel chapter 7 and the description of the events there, it is probably true that, "They who sat upon the thrones" are all the saints of God as Daniel sets it forth in his great 7th chapter. In other words, the martyrs in their faith is to be vindicated. Then we read,

"I saw thrones, they sat upon them. Judgment was given to them. I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their foreheads and upon their hand. And they came to life and they reigned with Christ for a thousand years."

Now, the point I want you note is the expression, "They came to life," or "they lived." With reference to the common view concerning amillennialism, this is something of the crux of the controversy. Amillennialians refer the "lived" to regeneration, that is to being born again, the saints being born again, "they came to life," referring to the

regeneration of the saints. Pre-millennialists refer "and they lived" to the resurrection of the body.

Now, if it is true that this refers to the resurrection of the body, then the ordinary view of amillennialism is overthrown for the resurrection, if that's true as pre-millennialists say, if this is the resurrection, the resurrection of the body we know, takes place at the Second Advent, and since it true, or generally the view of the Christian faith that the resurrection takes place then, then there can be no kingdom now. Where we read, "they lived" or "came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years," amillennialists generally believe we are living in the age of kingdom now. The kingdom is not upon earth. The kingdom is in heaven, but if it is true, that they "lived" or "came to life" is a reference to the resurrection of the body, then there is no kingdom now, and thus there is no kingdom now on earth, there is no kingdom now in heaven. The kingdom is in the future. Furthermore, the expression, "those who have been beheaded" tends to support the pre-millennial position because it's plain they were beheaded physically.

Now, when it says, "they came to life" we would normally understand this to be, they came to life physically. That is a reference to the physical body. That's the way they were beheaded, this is the way they come to life. You cannot, by normal hermeneutical principles, or interpretational principles, you cannot normally say they lost their physical life. They came to life spiritually. As a matter of fact, they were spiritually alive, and that's why they lost their lives, so we again, find a difficulty with normal amillennialism. So it would suggest that the regeneration comes after they were beheaded for their faith, which it seems to me, one cannot reasonably do.

Now, it is true that there have been some excellent students of the word of God, who have held to amillennialism, and I respect them and in many of their writings I find a great deal of profit. I feel that in this particular instance they have not hit upon the truth of the word of God, and after all, all of us who seek to interpret the Bible, if we are honest with ourselves, even those appear to be as dogmatic as I, if you get me in the right

situation, I will say, and gladly say it, "I do not have what I feel is final knowledge on that point," and I could do that on many, many, points. I do not want you to get the wrong impression. There are many things about the word of God I do not understand. I want to understand them, and I still study. In fact, I am an old man still studying the Scriptures trying to come more accurately to an understanding of the word that God has given to us.

One of the men who has meant a lot to me in other ways has been Anthony A. Hoekema. Professor Hoekema, was for many years, Professor of Systematic Theology at Calvin Seminary in Grand Rapids. He's written some excellent books, and incidentally, it has been published posthumously, a book on salvation, not long ago. I hope we'll have in our book room, and sell it because it's an excellent book on soteriology, strongly Calvinistic, and of course there that's one of the reasons that I like it, and I would recommend that you buy it and read it. He has also written a book called *The Bible and The Future*. It's a book on eschatology.

When I was teaching at Trinity, they asked me to teach eschatology. They didn't all the confidence in the world in some of the other people, but they figured that I, coming from Dallas would at least be pre-millennial, and that's the viewpoint of the seminary, and so I was given the task of teaching eschatology. I've always felt in teaching the word of God that if you are going to talk about someone else's viewpoint, you want to find out who expresses it the best, and you use that individual as the individual who's views you are seeking to criticize. In other words, you shouldn't go off and take someone who's made some wild statements that happens to belong to a viewpoint that you want to attack, and use him as the one you want to criticize. You want to take the best representative of the opposing view and seek to answer him.

I considered Professor Hoekema the best example of the opposing viewpoint, and so every year at Trinity I'd have my students read his book, and then write me a critique, and so I've read, I guess, several hundred. Our classes were usually fifty or sixty more in class. Every one of them would have to write me a critique. I've read hundreds of

critiques of Professor Hoekema's book, and I've gotten some interesting criticisms of it. Some good, some bad, but Professor Hoekema believes that the thousand years of Revelation 20: 4-6, is a complete period. What he calls, "a very long period of indeterminate length." But you should not think of as a thousand years, just as a complete period. It's a period of indeterminate length. The binding of Satan refers to the continuing deception of the nations in the gospel era, as he did in the past. In other words, Satan is bound at the present time, and being bound at the present time, he is not bound totally. He's bound simply in the fact that he does not deceive the nations, and so the gospel is able to go out to the nations, in the present era, therefore, in criticizing Professor Hoekema, we should not necessarily quote, "The devil is a roaring lion going about seeking to devour whom he may" without some explanation.

The text that particularly, I think, is contrary to Professor Hoekema's viewpoint is 2 Corinthians chapter 3 in which Paul speaks specifically about the fact that individuals do not respond to the gospel because their minds have been blinded by the God of this age. It is just not true, in my opinion, that Satan is not engaged in the deceptive work of blinding men's eyes at the present time. He speaks of the saints reigning in heaven, and when he comes to the question of they "came to life," he says, "This is not bodily resurrection. If it's bodily resurrection, then you can have no kingdom at the present time," as we just pointed out because the resurrection, we know, takes place at the Second Advent. So he says what this refers to "came to life" refers simply to the transition from the physical death to life in heaven with Christ in disembodied form. So it means simply communion with Christ in heaven.

But Professor Hoekema, to his credit, he says, this is "an unusual sense" of the term. In other words, he admits that you really cannot find anything much that would support this view. He says he thinks he's found one passage in Luke chapter 20, in verse 37 and verse 38, where that may be true. He doesn't even speak dogmatically about that one. What makes it difficult is that this expression, "and they lived" is the precise

expression that is used in this book Revelation concerning our Lord Jesus Christ's resurrection back in chapter 2, in verse 8, we read, "And to the angel of the church in Smyrna write the first and the last who was dead and has come to life." As a matter of fact, the precise tense of the verb is used, which would suggest that since "they live," or "he lived" refers to Christ's bodily resurrection, "they lived and reigned with Christ" refers to their bodily resurrection. So I find it very difficult in spite of a valiant defense by Professor Hoekema to believe that view.

Incidentally, he says that verse 5, when we read "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years are completed" is not to be taken as if they did live when the thousand years are completed because you see, if you do affirm that they did live after the thousand years are completed, this is a reference not to the believers but the unbelievers and you would be saying that the unbelievers attain to the life in heaven with Christ. The rest of the dead did not live until the thousand years are completed, so Professor Hoekema says that's a negative expression, and we are not to assume that the positive will take place, but he's forgotten a point.

Some of us who have spent our lives exogeting can come up with a nugget every now and then, and in verse 3, we read in this very context, "Satan was thrown into the abyss. It was shut, sealed over him, so that he could not deceive the nations any longer until the thousand years were completed." The very same expression, "until the thousand years are completed," but then we read in verse 7, "and when the thousand years are completed, Satan will be released from his prison." So in the very same context, we have that which is contrary to Professor Hoekema's opinion.

Now, "they lived and reigned with Christ." This is the answer to the question that the apostles asked our Lord right after his resurrection. "Will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And he said, "No, that's a question that I won't answer that belongs to the Father in heaven." This is the answer to the question. The kingdom will be restored to Israel when they come to life and reign with him for a thousand years. The question

about where they will reign is, I think, answered again by the context. The Second Advent of chapter 19 is our Lord's return to the earth. We have events on the earth in the latter part of chapter 19 described. Then in chapter 20, in verse 7, "And when the thousand years are completed Satan will be released from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth." Everything from that time on has been concerned with events upon the earth. So to answer the question, "Where shall they reign?" They will reign upon the earth.

Now, in chapter 5, verse 9, I don't know whether I cited this. You know when you speak at 8:30 in the morning, and then again at 11, and you are talking on the same topic, it takes an infallible man to remember every detail that he said in the previous hour, and try to keep from repeating it again, so I may be repeating myself, but fortunately it doesn't hurt to repeat the words of Scripture. We read in verse 10, "And thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our God, and they will reign upon the earth." So what we are talking about is the earth. Now, that's a question that we will have to, at another time reserve the question of whether that's a reference to the new earth, or this earth as we know it. We cannot solve all the questions in our brief time. So where will they reign? I answer they will reign upon the earth. At the end of the thousand years they're still on the earth.

In chapter 20, verse 9, and further more it's not the new earth there. They're still on the earth, the old earth, so far as I can tell. Verse 5, "The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed," this is the first resurrection. This is a reference of course to the bodily resurrection because these are the individuals who are not saved. They will be resurrected, and later we will talk about that. For we read in verse 11, "I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it from whose presence earth and heaven fled away. No place was found for them. And I saw the dead great and small standing before the throne." They had been resurrected with a body in which they shall suffer eternal judgment. So resurrection is something that applies to both believers

and unbelievers, the resurrection that's taught in other places as well, so let's hasten on. There is no new birth then after the kingdom then as far as this passage is concerned.

This is the first resurrection.

Now, the term first is used with reference to the second, which follows, not a reference to preceding orders in the resurrection as given by Paul in 1 Corinthians. Incidentally, there's another point that I need to mention. The term resurrection. That term occurs in the New Testament, in the Greek text. The term is anastasis that occurs about forty-two times. In every case, but possibly one, it refers to a bodily resurrection. So we're again citing evidence that amillennialists and Professor Hoekema for that matter too cannot, I think, reasonably answer. The text closes with an interpretative beatitude. "Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection. Over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him for a thousand years." Three reasons are given as to why it's a blessed thing for an individual to have part in the first resurrection, the bodily resurrection, the one to which we look forward at our Lord's second coming. He will not suffer the second death. He will be a priest of God forever. He has access to God, and thirdly, he will rule in the kingdom.

Now, one last point. You're minds are tired aren't they. I can tell. I look out there. The eyes of a few of you have been closed, [Laughter] which indicates it was just a little bit too much for you, or else you stayed up too late last night. One or the other, or you're thinking about the fact that Oklahoma got beat. Well, that may have caused you to come in with a smile on your face down here in Texas, but one more point, and then I'll largely be through. The problem of the thousand years, it's mentioned six times in this section. When somebody says to you that the millennial kingdom is only mentioned one place in the Bible, please correct them, please correct them. Say the kingdom is found all through the Bible. It is true the length of it is mentioned only in this one place. Of course, it's mentioned six times in this one place, and there are many things in the Bible

on which we lay a great deal of stress, that occur only once, like the fall in the Garden of Eden. That's something that affects all of Christian theology, and it is described once in the Bible, referred to of course many times, but once. So this is a reference to the length of the kingdom.

Now, when I was going through theological seminary, when we came to verse 6, in the exaJesus of the Greek text of the book of Revelation, we used to have a semester long seminary course, in which we went through the Greek text of the book of Revelation interpretively. We didn't have any English text. We weren't allowed to have any English texts in any of our exaJesus classes, and so they were always exaJesus of the original text. My professor for this particular course was Dr. Everett F. Harrison, who later for many years was professor of New Testament at Fuller Seminary in California.

Now, Dr. Harrison, when he came here, he commented on the fact that the millennium is mentioned here in this passage, and that the thousand years is mentioned six times, and then he mentioned the fact that others had been critical of this passage because it's the only passage in which the length of the kingdom is mentioned, but he pointed out something with reference to verse 6, that I though was very important. This is an interpretive beatitude, and notice how it is written, "Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection over these, the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign for him a thousand years."

Now, what this beatitude does is interpret the vision. You can see that this is not part of the vision. This is an interpretation of the vision, but my Christian friend, the thousand years is found both in the vision and in the interpretation.

Now, if this were simply a vision, which was to be interpreted in an allegorical or spiritualizing way, you would not have the length or the thousand years mentioned in the interpretation, but the interpretation is an interpretation of the vision and thousand years is retained. Further, one final point, notice that when we read in verse 4, "They lived and reigned with him for a thousand years," the tense is past. "They lived" and "they reigned"

there is tense in the Greek text, but now in the interpretation, it is, "But they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with him for a thousand years." In other words, the vision is again interpreted, "they lived and reigned" is interpreted as a reference to the future, and so Dr. Harrison, he was not very much of a dispensationalist, although he signed the doctrinal statement, but he was a convinced pre-millennialist, and when he came to this particular thing and explained that, he turned out to us students, and he said, "That nails it tight. That nails it tight." In other words, this passage taken according to a normal, grammatical, historical, theological method of interpretation is support for a pre-millennial return of our Lord. We don't want to give you the impression there are not some other questions that one may raise. There are, but if you're looking for a great society, this is the divine great society, and it will be the world theater of the glory of our Lord and savior Jesus Christ.

When I grew up, as a presbyterian, every Sunday morning we would recite the Lord's Prayer, which has the expression, "Thy kingdom come." Now, I never didn't quite understand that in those days because I was not a Christian, but I look back now and think of that expression, "Thy kingdom come." That's a reference to the Messianic kingdom. The prayer that I prayed very ignorantly, when I followed along with the church, I now can pray fervently. "Thy kingdom come." And I believe, in the light of this great book, it's the kingdom of God upon the earth. It's the Eldorado. It's the Isles of the Blessed. It's the great age, glorious age of the future to which the word of God looks. Not the final of everything. An interim age, but a lengthy age in which our Lord is shown to be successful in the very place where he was crucified, and in the very place where Adam sinned, and threw us all into rebellion against the Lord God.

So if you're here today, and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we invite you by God's grace to recognize him as the savior of sinners who died for those who have fallen in Adam's fall, and through who eternal life is offered. Come to Christ. Believe in him. Trust in him. I believe you will enjoy a kingdom in the future, but even

if I should be wrong on this point, and Professor Hoekema and others should be right, you'll enjoy the salvation that you have in Christ. Come to Christ. Trust him. Look to him alone, and the blood that was shed for your salvation. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Father we are grateful to Thee for the word of God, for both the difficult and the easier passages. We pray that Thou wilt take the things that have been said and purify them if necessary, and may our minds grasp the things that are true, and Lord for any who may be here, who do not know our Lord, may by Thy grace they turn to him whom to know is life eternal. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.