***The Church, No. 2

Colossians 1:15-20

COL-125***

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Our subject is "Hymn in Honor of Christ," number 15 in Colossians 1:15-20.

In Colossians 1:18, we are taught that Jesus Christ, the God-Man Creator, and the Preeminent Person of the universe is also the head of the church, which is His body. If you'll move over to Colossians 1:24, you will read, "Now I rejoice," Paul says, "in my sufferings for your sake. And in my flesh, I do my share on behalf of His body (Christ's body, and then, in parentheses), (which is the church).” The body of Christ is called in Scripture "the church." The church is a special group of believers formed by God from Pentecost to the rapture of the church, when the church is taken to heaven. That's when the whole body of living and dead church-age saints are removed from the earth.

This is an extremely important area of Scripture. I'll remind you once more upfront that we are talking about the minority of the minority position among believers. Almost anybody in your religious circle of the regular denomination and the regular churches does not believe what we're going to be telling you this morning. They do not hold that this is the order and the plan of God. That is because the reformers, at the reformation, made a serious, serious mistake. We cannot fault them for it. They were struggling and fighting the battles of getting it straight on how to get to heaven – salvation by grace. They did not have time in their lives to work out prophecy. And they never grasped the difference between Israel and the church. So, all they did was take on the mistake of Roman Catholicism, which said that Israel is dead, and the church has taken its place, and that church is the Roman Catholic Church in authority on the earth. And the priesthood is your way to God, and the church is your ticket into heaven, and the princes of the church are the hierarchy that have been appointed. You can't get to God without the priesthood and the church.

So, all of this suddenly became terribly distorted, and unfortunately, those who inherited that (those who descended from the reformers: from Martin Luther, with the Lutherans; from Ulrich Zwingli and the Anabaptists; and, from John Calvin with the reformed churches – they all carried the same mistake down from the reformers to this day. And they're very cocky, and they're very confident in it.

So you need to listen carefully to be sure that they're not right and we are wrong, which we're not. The church is not Israel. And we showed you a long list last week of the differences in the Bible when it speaks of Israel, and when it speaks of church. And you can't possibly relate the two. The only way you can do that is to stop letting the words say what they mean. Spiritualize the language. Then you can make it mean anything you want it to mean.

The church is a totally separate work of God from Israel, and it in no way replaces Israel and God's plan for the ages. The church is going to run to its ultimate end in the heavenly realm, and Israel is going to run to its ultimate end that God is destined for it in the new earth. The church body has a vital life relationship to Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul points out here in Colossians 1:18: "He is the head. The church is His body." And therefore, He is the sustaining person. He is the sustaining element of the body – the organism: the church. The doctrine concerning the church was not revealed in the Old Testament. Nobody in the Old Testament ever heard about this plan of God that was in the future. That's why the details about the church are called mysteries, and we'll go over some of those in time.

**Mysteries**

"Mystery" means a secret not revealed in the Old Testament, but room allotted for this new program to come into effect. This new revelation came mostly after the ascension of Jesus back to heaven. It came to the apostles, and especially to the apostle Paul. Until then, it was hidden truth.

Now, the apostle Paul is the apostle of the church-age doctrine, par excellence. It was he who spent three years in the Arabian Desert after he was saved, being taught, by Jesus Christ directly, all the great details of the doctrines relating to the church age, and to the privileges of the royal family of Christians, and all that that connotes. God's program for Israel – where is it now? Well, it's on hold. But it will be resumed, and it will be fulfilled, after the rapture of the church, according to God's covenant promises to Israel, which were eternal. God doesn't go back on His Word. He cannot go back on His word and retain His integrity. He has not turned back upon the Jews.

It was a terrible blow, on May 17th, 1948, to these descendants of the reformers who followed the Roman Catholic doctrine that the church had replaced Israel. It was a terrible blow to them that day when Israel became a nation again, because they had been teaching their people for centuries: "There will never be another Israeli nation. Israel will never be a nation. They rejected their Messiah. God has abandoned them. God has thrown away all the promises, and He has taken all those good promises and given them to the church. So, they made an amalgamation between Judaism and Christianity, and brought all the religious, ritualistic priesthood system into Christianity. And then all of a sudden, here's a core feature that blows up right in their face. All of a sudden, they're having to explain to people: "Didn't you tell us since childhood that there never would be a nation of Israel?" Well, they had to spiritualize that too, and explain it away. It is strange how people, when finally the facts face them, they can't just change their opinion.

You should thank God, if you have the character that I think I do, that when the truth is presented, I'm willing to change to go with the truth. I'm willing to accept the truth. It's no problem for me. And I may have to go back and tell people, "Well, I was mistaken on this. I see now that this is the way it is." And that's the problem with great religious denominations that have been built upon a falsehood. They'll collapse if they give up their error.

So, this business of the church – you have to understand it. It has to be clear. It's a small statement that Paul makes: "He Christ – that He is also head of the body, the church." But what does that mean? It means everything to you and me. God's program for Israel is on hold, and once the church is completed, it will be back on track.

Everything that God promised Israel was fulfilled in the time span that Daniel revealed to us – that it would be 490 years, except on Palm Sunday, to the very day the end of the 483rd year, when they rejected their Messiah. And then God stopped the Jewish prophetic clock from ticking. He reached over and grabbed the pendulum and stopped it. Seven years have never been fulfilled of what God said will be the time span when I will fulfill all the covenants and all of My promises to Israel. Is He going to go back? No, He can't go back on that. How can you get away from that? Like the amillennialists and the Reformed churches? You spiritualize the words. You make them mean something else?

Well, when the church is out at the rapture, God's going to hit that pendulum, and the last seven years are going to tick away. That's the tribulation years. The reformers simply follow the Roman Catholic doctrine of replacing Israel with the church in God's plan, and incorporating, then, the Mosaic Law way of life under Judaism into the grace way of life of Christianity. So, you came with this mongrel mixture of Old Testament methods and way of life, and New Testament Christianity. And talk about putting a square peg into a round hole? How do you try to fit the legalistic lifestyle of Judaism with the freedoms and the Holy Spirit-directed based-on-doctrine lifestyle of Christianity together is beyond me. It's an impossibility. You cannot be true to what the Scripture says and do that. To replace Israel with the church requires abandoning the literal interpretation of Scripture and spiritualizing the words to mean what they do not say. That way you get rid of all of God's eternal, uncompromising, unrelenting promises that He is going to fulfill to Israel. You have to get rid of them by spiritualizing them away.

**The Baptism of the Holy Spirit**

The church body of Christ is today entered by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which places a believer into Christ at the point of that believer's salvation. 1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greek, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit." That verse declares to us that when you trust in Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit baptizes you into Christ, and forever unites you with Him. That's why you're saved. If you're not baptized by the Holy Spirit so that you're joined to Christ, you're not saved. You're not one of Him.

Now because the charismatics have followed the amillennial viewpoint in many respects, they have also fallen into the error of saying, "Well, the baptism of the Holy Spirit comes after you're saved." They've completely distorted that. Satan works in this way. Be aware of this. First of all, he will try to get you not to believe the gospel. He'll do everything he can to dissuade you from being saved. But if you become a Christian with all the power, and all the authority, and all the privileges appertaining thereto, he will then zero in on you to cause you to have a false doctrine of the Holy Spirit. If he can keep you out of heaven, he can at least neutralize you in the Christian life. And once you're wrong on the Holy Spirit, your life is useless. You're going to go through it. You're going to treadmill your way through your allotted lifespan. Buy you will never store your treasures in heaven. You'll never accomplish one divine good work. You'll never serve God in any acceptable way. You'll never enter the deep things of the Spirit of God. You'll never know the great power and enjoyment of seeing God lead your life – seeing the hand of God in all those little things that it is a privilege of the Christian to call upon God: "Lord, I need this book. Where on earth is it? I haven't seen this book. I need it. I need the information in that book. Where is it?" I looked down. I shove a box over, and there's the book! Accidental? It happens hundreds and hundreds of times every week: Going to God and saying, "What's the answer? Now propel me. Have an angel give me a shove in the right direction. Kick the thought into my mind." And the answer comes. That never happened to a Jew.

Do you want to go back to that? He never had the Holy Spirit in him. He never had that direct relationship. He never related to God himself. Do you want to go back to that? That's what it means to be a member of the body of Christ, the church. Most churches and denominations today follow the non-biblical error of replacing Israel with the church in God's plan of the ages. Satan has been very successful in confusing and neutralizing the magnificence and the power of the church age doctrines, and of the Christian as the royal family of God, possessing a special relationship to God.

**The Grace Plan of Salvation**

This always leads to confusion about the grace plan of salvation. Once you're wrong about the church as the contrast to the Jew in the age of the Law and legalism, and the church in the age of the grace of God. The Old Testament Jew was always trying to get God's favor by doing the right thing; being good; keeping the 613 rules of the Mosaic Law. And God said to him, "Do right, and I'll bless you." And he kept trying to do right, but he never could. All of a sudden, we come to the church age, and God says, "Now, I've done it all for you." You lean back; you relax; you learn doctrine; and, you flood your soul with the Word of God – with the mentality of your soul. You keep pounding it in there: every week; Sunday morning; Sunday night; and, reading of the Word as the week goes by. And you let the Holy Spirit be in charge of your life. Stay in temporal fellowship. Do not be like the world. Be like Christ. Follow His commandments. And the result will be the power of God will lead and direct, and all of heaven's blessings are already yours to enjoy. Just walk in and help yourself. The contrast was, in the church age, it's: "Be good because I've already blessed you with every heavenly blessing.

So when you abandon that, one of the first places of confusion is going to come is: how are you going to get to heaven. Salvation takes a body blow. The eternal security of the believer in his salvation is questioned. And the mission of the church in the present dispensation is completely distorted. You may have sometimes, if you are in the right circle of churches, heard preachers talk about bringing in the kingdom. What kingdom? That's Jewish. The only kingdom we Christians are associated with will be the Millennial Kingdom of Jesus Christ, and we're not going to bring that in. That isn't our mission at all. We're not bringing in any kingdom. The church is proclaiming the gospel of the grace of God, and building the body of Christ, and demonstrating what it is that God can do with a person who lives on the principles of doctrine.

**Pat Robertson**

Pat Robertson of the 700 Club does a lot of good things in the programs and the information he gives out. However, he does not believe in the doctrine of the rapture. As a charismatic, he does not believe in the eternal security of the believer. He does not believe that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is automatically received at the point of salvation. I have heard him teach on the Holy Spirit, and when it was finished, 90% of what he said on television to millions of people was totally unbiblical and wrong. That's the devil's work. He thinks he performs miracles. When he was running for president, he told us that he had prayed to God and prevented a hurricane from hitting the east coast because he had ordered Satan to stop. He claims to heal people, except those in hospitals. He receives prophecies from God, and he's always telling us, "God has told me this. I have a word of knowledge. I have a word of insight. God told me this." He says that he speaks in languages when he makes gibberish sounds. I always think he needs a few Tums so he'd quit making those sounds. A growling stomach will really make you speak in tongues in the charismatic style.

This week he got into angels. And from angels, he dropped off into near-death experiences of people who died and came back to life. That was the program. And he had them on the program left and right. Now, I got interested in this. I thought to myself, "I often preach to people who look like they're near death, or have just come back from it. Maybe I can learn something. This is the information I need." So, I started listening a little more closely here. And he had people testifying that they had kicked off, and they'd seen a heavenly light at the end of the tunnel, and they had been surrounded. They told how they were surrounded by all these angels fluttering about them with wings, even though the Bible tells us that most angels, except for cherubim and seraphim, don't have wings. And, of course, there was all the great magnificent brilliance of the glory of God that they saw.

One lady also testified to swirling down into hell and hearing the screams, and the groans, and the wailing, and the gnashing of the teeth before she escaped and came back to life. Now these testimonies were treated with great awe as divine revelations that the 700 club was able to bring to the people of the nation. These, who had once been corpses, and now are restored, in spite of Hebrews 9:27, were being taken seriously. Hebrews 9:27 says, "Inasmuch as it is appointed for humankind to die once, and after this comes judgment." That's the doctrinal principle. You die, and you face the judgment of your destiny. That's all there is to it. There is no escaping. There is no second chance. It's only in outfits like Mormonism that you get the second crack at it, or something of that nature. This is it. And yet, here he has these restored corpses on television, testifying, as this lady did: "When I saw hell, I knew it was for real, and I came back, and I told people. I tell people everywhere that I've been there, and it's for real. And I became a believer." Well, I don't know what she is, but I do know that she never died and went to hell. She was never there, or she would never have returned.

Scripture contradicts the claim of experience. That doesn't bother charismatics. Experience and how I feel about things – that's the truth. Robertson, interestingly enough, then got off into telling about the historical incident in Luke 16:19-31 about Lazarus, the beggar, and the rich man. And he related the experience that Lazarus and the rich man had after they both died. And he pointed out that it was made clear to the rich man there was no escape possible for him to have a second chance at salvation. And he'd just been having people on the program who were, in effect, testifying, as voices and prophecies and prophets of God that they had a second chance, and how they had come back. And yet Robertson wasn't for one moment intimidated by this contradiction. And he proceeded to pretend that these people were actually speaking the truth. No one can come back from the dead to life again.

Luke 16:27-29, "And he (the rich man) said (when he found that he could not cross over, and he could not get help with some water on his tongue), then I beg you father Abraham, that you send him (Lazarus) to my father's house, for I have five brothers – that he may warn them, lest they also come to this place of torment." That's what Robertson was doing. Robertson says, "I'm warning. I'm having these people testify to their experience to warn you what's on the other side."

But notice verse 29. Here's what God had to say: "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." He said, "No. You go to the Bible. What the Bible says is the voice of God, not somebody coming back from the dead telling you they had an experience." How do you know they had that experience? Were you there with them? Did you walk through it? Or is this some grand hallucination that they've experienced? What kind of a trick miracle is this that Satan often will perform? Are you the dup of that, perhaps? You don't know about people's experiences, but you do know about what the Bible says. God speaks only through His word – not through messengers from the dead. And today he doesn't even send angels anymore. We have it all recorded.

So what's the answer? The answer here of this Scripture is that if people will not believe God's Word the Bible, they will not be reached by someone resurrected from the dead. They will not be reached by someone who comes back from the dead. Luke 16:30: "But he (the rich man) said, 'No father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.' But he (Abraham) said to the rich man, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone rises from the dead.'" So, here Robertson, completely oblivious to the very story he's telling, how he's being contradicted by that Scripture, and he blandly goes right on, giving out this misinformation left and right. He is presenting these people with their near-death experiences as messengers from God to them.

Well, from this base, he then jumped off into inviting people, to escape all this terrible future, by becoming saved. And he invited them to salvation without once clearly stating that you can be saved because someone else has paid the death penalty for your sins. He never once said, "Christ has died for you, and paid for your sins." He never indicated that the sinner's moral guilt had now been removed so that God is free to accept you into heaven. And he never once said, "You must believe this good news. This is the gospel of the grace of God. You must believe that Christ has paid for your sins, and you must now trust Him to save you."

Then he proceeded, instead of: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved" (of Act 16:31), he used meaningless non-biblical phrases like "inviting Jesus into your life." He kept saying, "Give your life to Jesus Christ." And then he really put in the kicker when he said, "Open your heart's door to let Jesus in. He's knocking." He was trying to quote Revelation 3:20, which has nothing to do with salvation. It has to do with the Christian who's out of temporal fellowship, and Christ is banging on the door, saying, "Hey, wake up. I want you to confess." It's like that Psalm they read in Berean Church this morning: "I want you to confess." That 32nd Psalm happens to be David speaking, who, for one year after his adulterous relationship, would not confess to God that this was bad, and that he had murdered a man in the process – that he was wrong in doing it. Finally, he was so crushed, he said, "I confess." That was a terrible thing, but then God picked him up, and God said, "I'm not going to put you to death. Instead, I'm going to treat you in grace because you have finally confessed. And what happened? The finest 25 years of the life of King David then followed.

Robertson never once made it clear that it was believing and accepting that God is not a liar when He says, "My justice is satisfied. I'll accept you if you'll receive My Son as your Savior."

Now this made me very sad to watch and to listen to this misguided, non-biblical, confused presentation of the marvelous church-age gospel of the grace of God unto salvation. This was listened to by millions of people because Pat Robertson has the money to propagate errors and to get out the delusions of Satan that have been foisted on him by the devil. And it's hard to find that. It's a little tricky, because so much of what he does is on target. So much of what he does is even biblically accurate in prophetic matters. And much of what he does certainly is very discerning in terms of societal matters. But that's the good bread that's hiding the cyanide of false doctrine that he preaches. It made me very sad. And this is why I don't mind telling you that I am really praying that God will place me in a position of the stewardship of great financial resources so that the sound truth of doctrine, in an uncompromising way can be given to a confused Christendom. There are few people in this world who are free to preach the Word of God as we are here at Berean church because of this congregation.

So, I think that the angelic host. I know enough about the angels, and I know enough about the purpose of God. I think the angelic host is waiting to see what God will do at Berean Church with one man who has the funding, and the means to turn on the powerful Berean beacon light of doctrinal truth to the world – what one man can do in bringing the truth of the light of the Word of God to a world that's in confusion and longing, and all they're faced with are clowns like Pat Robertson and the charismatics.

I think it was D.L. Moody who once said, in listening to a preacher, he heard the preacher say that the world is still waiting to see what God will do with a man wholly dedicated to Him. When D.L. Moody heard that, he said, "I'm going to be that man." What would happen if there was one man who had the material resources, who did nothing all day long but was preoccupied with: how can I fund the work of God at Berean Church to make its maximum impact in the short time left to us before we're all out of here?

So why don't you pray for me, because I think I can be a steward of God's resources, because I can handle it? I know that achievements for eternity are done by the acting now. And I'm capable of acting in the now. That's the problem with many people who never achieve anything for eternity. They're waiting for the day when things come together for them. They're waiting for the better situation. They're waiting when this is straightened out, and this is taken care of. And in the process, the devil gets them all tied up with so many other trivialities, they can't be thinking about serving God every day of their lives. They have too many other things that the unbelievers could be doing that they're doing, and the work of God is left undone. I can guarantee you that if it were my decision-making that was involved, there would be no waiting for a better position before I would act. I've never been like that. And I wouldn't do that now. There is little left of tomorrow, and the night is at hand.

So, here's a prayer request that Paul extended to the Thessalonian Christians, and I'll extend it to you for me. In 1 Thessalonians 5:25, Paul says, "Brethren pray for me." And the reason for that request is that the door of opportunity would be open to him – that the door of ministry and of potential would be open to him, such that he didn't have to stop and build tents (make tents) so that he could fund the work of the ministry that was at hand with the top quality associates he had. Yes, some of them drifted off. Demas finally deserted him completely. And others would drift off because they got tied up with the world in one way or another. They couldn't see what is trivial and what is real.

So brethren, pray for me. This is the moment of great opportunity. And I saw that program with Robertson, and saw how successful the devil can be, and it all looks so religious, and it's all so shallow, and it is all so misguided. What would God do with the person who did nothing but be preoccupied with: "How can I make the Berean ministry be funded to the extent of its capacity?"

**The Church**

The church in the New Testament is called the "ekklesia," E K K L E S I A. As we pointed out, it comes from the word "ek," meaning "out," and the verb "kaleo," meaning "to call:" "the called out." So, the church connotes an assembly of believers called out from the mass of humanity in some special respect. Therefore, it is referred to as an assembly or a congregation. It is used in this sense both by the Jews and by the Gentiles in the ancient world.

Now, to clarify further for you, this issue of the problem of the church and the confusion with Israel. One of the ways to show the distinctiveness of the church, and the orderliness of God's plan is to take a look at the relationship of the church to the Millennial Kingdom. Amillennialists say that there is no kingdom. Postmillennialists say, "We're bringing in the kingdom." The premillennialists say that there's still time for us in the future, and the church is going to be out of this world. The relationship between the church; the seven-year tribulation turmoil of the wrath of God; and, the Millennial Kingdom – what's a relationship? If you get this straight, you'll understand why the Reformed churches, which are descended from the reformed theologians, missed the boat completely, as indeed have the Roman Catholics.

**Historic Premillennialism**

There is this position, first of all, which we may refer to as historic premillennialism. For the first three centuries, nobody believed anything else (except one man – I'll mention him in a minute). All of them took the Bible literally. And all of them, when they read the Scripture, were premillennialists. And if you get our dispensational tapes, you'll find me listing, by centuries: this writer; this writer; and, this writer. And I quote from them their statements about pre-millennialism. Jesus Christ is going to come pre the millennium. "Pre" means "before." And it means that Christ will return for His church. Christ will return for His church before the millennium. The millennium is a 1,000-year period. It comes from the Latin word, and it is the reign of Jesus Christ for a 1,000 years over all the nations of the earth.

Now, one of the hardest Scriptures for the people who don't believe in a literal millennium (a literal kingdom of Christ ruling over the kingdom of David on this earth is Revelation 20:1-4: "And I saw an angel coming down from heaven having the key of the abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, the serpent of old, who is the devil in Satan, and bound him for 1,000 years, and threw him into the abyss, and shut it, and sealed it over him so that he should not deceive the nations any longer until the 1,000 years were completed. After these things, he must be released for a short time. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who have been beheaded because of the testimony of Jesus, because of the Word of God." That's during the tribulation: "And those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forward and upon their hand. And they came to life and reigned with Christ for 1,000 years."

That Scripture, along with many Old Testament Scriptures about the kingdom of God upon this earth and the rule of the Messiah Savior over all nations, as well as New Testament Scriptures, are the basis that tell us that Christ is going to rule over an earthly kingdom here on this earth for a 1,000-year period. This is, of course, based on a literal interpretation of prophecy.

Now, they didn't quite get it right in historic premillennialism in the early centuries, right after the New Testament church. They did have this correct – that the church age was an indefinite period of time, and that it was different from Israel. It had nothing to do with Israel. Israel was on hold, and Israel's program was temporarily postponed. God's special group of people being called out from among Jew and Gentile was called the church. They did understand that there was a seven-year tribulation period to complete or Daniel's timetable. But they made the mistake of thinking that the church was going through it. Historic premillennialism was wrong at that point. They thought that Jesus was going to come into the air, and meet the church. They understood the 1 Thessalonians 4 rapture, but they thought that they were going to turn right around and come right back down to the earth, and the millennium would begin and end up in a new earth in a new heaven.

**Origen**

They didn't get it quite right, but they were pretty close. And for the first 300 years of Christianity, all the church theologians believed in what we call historic premillennialism. Anybody who believed anything else was considered a heretic. There was one man, a fellow named Origen, who lived from 185 to 254 A.D. He was Satan's agent to throw the monkey wrench into the works. He came along and said, "You know, you can't take the Bible for what it says. The Bible is a spiritual book. The words have spiritual meanings. You have to look underneath the words and see what the real spiritual meaning is of those words. And the result was spiritualizing the Bible – non-literal interpretation. And when he went to prophecy, he made a mess of everything. He rejected all of this as a literal kingdom upon the face of the earth. Now, he didn't come up with anything else. He had no substitute, and everybody just passed him off as a heretical misconception.

**Amillennialism**

The next thing that came along is called amillennialism. This idea was now built upon Origen's idea of spiritualizing the words of Scripture. And it was devised by a man named Augustine, one of the great fathers of the church, who taught a lot of good things. He lived from 358 to 434 A.D. Augustine held the viewpoint however of the Greek philosopher Plato that material matter is inherently evil, and that everything having to do with the earth is evil. That's what Plato taught, and this is what Augustine believed as a Greek philosopher.

I don't know how he got around the fact that God, when He finished the week of creation, said that everything He made was good – very good. Nevertheless, Augustine ignored these Scriptures. He ignored the fact that there was going to be a new earth to restore. He didn't believe there was going to be a new planet earth made by God. He completely went over to spiritualizing words everywhere. He therefore rejected a literal kingdom rule by Jesus Christ on this evil earth. Material is dirty. It's evil. Christ would not hold a kingdom to reign over on this earth.

So, he had to spiritualize the meaning of all those predictions about Christ ruling over all nations. Augustine and Origin's non-literal method of interpretation then spiritualized the tribulation: "Seven years. Well, not seven years. Seven years is a perfect number. However long it is. The millennium? Well, not a millennium."

Oh, how I remember the head of the Bible department at Baylor University when I was there, looking me in the eye, and saying, "John, you must understand that when the Bible says 1,000 years, it doesn't mean 1,000 years. It means just a long period of time." Where did he get that? Well, that's how people talk: "I've got a so much to do, it's going to take me a million years to do this." Do you mean a million years? No, I just mean a long period of time. And he actually believed that. He's dead now. Has he ever learned?

Augustine also spiritualized the new earth. So, all this is based on a non-literal interpretation of Scripture. The word "a" in the Greek is a negative. So, amillennial means no kingdom on this earth. Here's what he taught. He said there is going to be a church age. First, he said for 1,000 years. And he said, after the year 1,000, Jesus Christ is going to return. He was pressed at first to say, "Yes, 1,000 years is really 1,000 years, actually. And, of course, he lived in 400, so he could say that and make a big hit. Well, when the year 1,000 came along, everything was blown out of the water because Christ didn't return. So, his amillennialists said, "We made a mistake of making it literal. Don't make words of Scripture literal. They're symbolic meaning." So, 1,000 meant a long period of time. But when Jesus returns, 1 Thessalonian 4, the believers of all ages meet Him in the air. They go to heaven. That's it. And the dead are placed in hell. It's very simple. The lost are sent to hell. And then there's no new earth, because material is evil. The earth is destroyed. Nothing is out there. You got a lot of Scripture in the book of the revelation that you can't fit into anything. There is only one physical resurrection here, and a judgment day which divides the saved and lost.

When I grew up in my liturgical denominational reformation church, judgment day to me was always a day when we were going to find out who made it and who didn't. I knew quite a few people who weren't going to make it, but I never was so sure about myself. Judgment day was bingo day here. And you won, or you lost, because it was not based on the grace of God, but it was based on your behavior and your good works. So, there was only one physical resurrection.

This is drastically different from the Scripture which says that there are two resurrections: the first resurrection; and, the second resurrection, and that there's 1,000 years between them. But Augustine simply blew that off. He presented this simple picture, spiritualized the words. And the Roman Catholic Church looked at this. They called a conference at Ephesus in 431, a church council. And they declare this to be the official doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church, and it is to this day.

This is what the reformers had. They never worked out the mistakes. So, it all came right down to today. And all the idiots today do not understand that the reformers gave them the right clue when they said, "Do what the Bible says. The Bible is your only guide." Instead, they're going back to their reformer founders, who never got it straight, and they're listening to them to this day.

This view was increasingly attractive to the powerful Roman Catholic Church at the time, because this way they could make it clear that Israel had been replaced by the church, and that assured them that the church was now the kingdom of God to rule over all nations, and the priests and the hierarchy were the princess of the church. The 1,000-year millennium didn't change. It didn't work out. The year 1,000 came, so they changed it to being an unspecified period of time, which is what our amillennialists believe today.

Augustine also taught when he was asked: "Well look at the tribulation." He said, "Well, that's going on at the same time as the millennium. The millennium is going on now, and the tribulation is going on now because Christians suffer." For him, it was not a seven-year period. He said, "Oh, that just means a long period of suffering for Christians. Even the seven years, which is a perfect number in Scripture, got totally distorted. So, they brought up to him, "Well, Satan's supposed to be bound." He said, "Well, he was – at the cross. He was defeated." But the Bible makes it very clear that Satan is going around as a roaring line, seeking whom he may devour. He is free. He is not bound from deceiving the nations. He still deceives them.

The kingdom reign of Jesus Christ – what happened to that? Well that was now placed in heaven. The throne of David suddenly gets off of this earth and comes up into heaven. Every place along the line, forget what the words say – make it mean what spiritually you think it should mean. What about the first resurrection and the second resurrection? Well, the first resurrection is where a believer is regenerated spiritually, and the second resurrection is here where he comes up out of the grave. But the 1,000-year period now is just a long period of time. There is no literal 1,000 years between these two resurrections. The new earth – that's heaven for Augustine.

Now amillennialism – this is the viewpoint held today, including by liberals who do not hold to a literal interpretation of Scripture. You can see the problem of distorting what the church is, and why the church is so misunderstood today, because amillennialism is what most churches teach.

**Post-Millennialism**

Ah, but there's another view – a view that became so popular that the Protestants, in wholesale, abandoned amillennialism in the 17th century, and rushed over to this new view. It's called post-millennialism. We'll you about that tonight.

But two things happened in history, and post-millennialism was shattered. And lo and behold, would you believe it? In the last decade, it has now been revived as one of the most distorted views of the church and of the millennial Scriptures, and it is now going big guns. I'll tell you why tonight. And then we'll also show you where the church really fits in, in the biblical concept of the premillennial, dispensational, pre-tribulation rapture of the church concept. That concept fits every Scripture in a literal way. You don't have to twist the Word of God. Please join us.

Father, we thank You for helping us get a better picture of the mistakes of the past, and to understand the subtlety of Satan's working to try to confuse us, and keep from us what the church really is."

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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