***The Age of the Kingdom, No. 2  
  
DS10A***

During the final arrangement of God's dealing with mankind on this earth, which will be a fourth dispensation--the dispensation of the kingdom, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will be the steward. The dispensation of the kingdom will be the time when all of the Old Testament covenants and the promises of an earthly messianic kingdom will be fulfilled.

The study of the dispensations is a study which is not always welcomed in certain circles. One of the questions that very naturally reoccurs is: How is it that men who are scholarly; who know the Word of God; who understand the original languages; and, who have studied the Scriptures will often be the very ones who reject the doctrine of the dispensations? They will be the ones who reject the fact that God has a plan of the ages, and that that plan is moving along in a certain way. I don't know that we can always answer what motivates any certain individual man who is a student of the Word in rejecting the doctrine of the dispensations. Many times, that rejection is really the result of his not understanding what we mean by the doctrine of the dispensations.

There has been much distortion on this subject in the past. It has had some segments that have been carried to an extreme position which is not merited and justified by Scripture. Therefore, that is part of the explanation--that people do not have normative dispensationalism in mind when we speak of this doctrine. They have some kind of a caricature that we ourselves would reject as well as they do. When we speak of the dispensations, we're talking about that which is revealed in Scripture. Some of these men actually reject it because it poses a very grave problem with their own denominational relationships.

**Covenant Theology**

The opposing view to premillennial dispensationalism is summed up in the phrase "covenant theology." The covenant theologians do not believe that there is any future for the Jewish people. They do not believe that there is anything in the form of an earthly rule of Christ over the nations of the world. They do not believe that Jesus Christ is coming to fulfill an earthly throne promised to Him at the point of His birth to His mother, and so on. They do not believe that the church is a distinct body from Israel. They believe that the church is actually God's answer to the Jews' rejection of the promises which were made to them in those covenants that we have already study.

Now as you look through the Word of God, and particularly as we come to this dispensation of the kingdom, we're going to be looking at what the Bible describes concerning this particular segment of human history. I want you to keep in mind as we look at this segment, asking yourself the question: Have these things been fulfilled? Are you aware, anywhere along the line in human history, where these conditions that are described, that we'll be reading about here in Scripture, have ever existed in the world? Then understand that the men who are sound theologians--intelligent, wise, and educated men--are confronted with these same Scriptures. So what do you do with them?

**Amillennialism**

Well, immediately there's only one way out, and that is to say, which is the position of Covenant Theology, that the Bible does not mean literally word-for-word what it says. They say that the Bible says some things, but you must interpret those symbolically. You must give this a spiritual interpretation. The covenant theologian is often described as an amillennialist, and the word "amillennial" means "no millennium." It uses the Greek word "a" which is a negative, and they mean that no millennium at all exists. He takes the position that the throne of Christ upon this earth is to be spiritualized. It's in heaven. When it speaks about a wonderful marvelous rule of Christ over the nations of the world, that's described as heaven to the covenant theologian or the amillennialist. He says, "That's Christ in heaven ruling over the nations of the world." When we speak about the return of Christ, there is no rapture. There is simply the church being caught up in the air, and immediately turning around and coming right down with Jesus Christ to the Mount of Olives, and a mass huge judgment day taking place, and eternity begins.

**Postmillennialism**

Remember that before World War I, there were two main positions concerning this period that we are studying tonight--the millennium, or the Kingdom Age. One was called the postmillennial theory, and the one that you are more acquainted with was the premillennial theory. The postmillennial theory had the concept that Jesus Christ was going to come after a period where the world was getting better and better. Scientific technology was going to advance the cause of mankind to such a degree that man was going to get better and better. The world was going to become so much better that finally, after a period of golden age glory of humanity on earth (the postmillennium, which was not literally 1,000 years), Jesus Christ was going to return.

The premillennialist at the time said, "Oh no, you're wrong. What the Bible teaches is that the world is going to get worse and worse until it comes to a cataclysmic blow up. And that's going to be the end of it. And when it becomes so bad that humanity is almost ready to wipe itself off the face of the earth, then Jesus Christ comes in and then He sets up His kingdom on this earth, and then the millennium begins. Christ comes before the millennium. So, we are premillennialists."

Well, along came World War I, and it gave a good kick in the head to the idea of postmillennialism. It was a staggering blow. However, during the 1920s, it still survived. Schools of theology were still cranking out men into the ministry who were teaching the postmillennial idea. Then along came World War II, and that kicked the other side of the head. That finished off the postmillennial concept. Nobody today in his right mind teaches postmillennialism. All of these people who were in these theological schools and in these churches who held this position that the world was getting better and better, and they didn't give up, right up through World War II. All of these people who thought that were now in a real problem. What were they going to do? The logical conclusion would have been that the premillennialists must be right. Obviously, history was not confirming that the world was improving. The more scientific advancement we have, the worse things get.

By the end of World War II, with the scientific advancement of the nuclear age, it was obvious that man now had at his disposal the worst thing that he ever had to destroy himself with. So you would have thought that these people would have said, "We will go to the premillennialists' position," but no.

Instead, they resisted that, and they came up with a new position called amillennialism. This position said, "Forget it. There is no millennium." I remember when I was a student at Baylor University in the Bible department, and I tried to speak out on the premillennialist position in an amillennialist institution in an amillennialist denomination. I can still remember how that professor got up, and he was really smooth. He was a good smooth preacher, and I can remember it because his eyes would exude a warmth. He would get up there, and I remember him in class one day saying, "We have now concluded World War II. The American nation stands in great prestige all around the world. All of the world is now open before us to the gospel. Our technology and our scientific advancement, which have evolved from the war, will open up to us great doors. The gospel will be going everywhere. Man will be responding to the appeals of the grace of God. We will see all over the world such a great movement for the Lord as we have never seen before."

Well, it would whet your eyes, and it would warm the cockles of your heart. All of that sounded very moving. Of course, many of these Bible students were preacher boys, and there were "Amens" going up all over the class--all except from a few dumb premillennialists who sat there who also had come out of that war; who also knew the realities that were involved in that moment of history; and, who had grounds from a scriptural frame of reference not to expect that man was now going to go to a good end, but to exactly what the Bible said he was going to go to--a destructive end. Well, history has since proven that the premillennialists were again right. The amillennialists' hope was a cover-up for the hope that the world is getting better. This professor was an amillennialist. That's what he called himself, and he thought that he could explain it.

Well, I finally said to him, "Professor, the problem seems to me to be how we take the Word of God. Do we take it as newspaper English? That is, do the words mean what they mean, like you read your newspaper? Or are we going to be at the mercy of what anybody thinks about any word? So when the Bible says in Revelation 20 that there's going to be a 1,000-year period of rule of Christ upon this earth, what can it mean but that?"

He said, "Oh, John, it doesn't mean that. When it says 1,000 years, that just means a long period of time. It's like when you have something to do and it's going to take you a long time, you say, 'It's going to take me a million years to do this.' You don't mean a million years. You mean a long period of time." That is a classic example of how the amillennialist theologian thinks. Was he an ignorant man? No, he was the head of a Bible department of a great university. Was he uneducated? No. Did he know the Bible? Yes. Did he know the languages? Yes. It's profitless for you to try to explain and get some understanding of why covenant theologians and amillennialists hold the positions they do as you read the simple statements of Scripture. It is better to spend your time seeing "What says the Lord?" Then we go from there, and you establish your understanding upon the Word of God. It's best not to try to understand the motivations that drive men away from the Word of God, who should be the ones who should understand it.

So during the period that we have been studying, we have come through the tribulation period. We are now moving into this time of the millennium, and either the Bible teaches such a period in human history yet before us with the Lord Jesus Christ as the ruler of the world, or else this is the greatest hoax and a complete fraud. It's either true, or it's not true. That is the line which is drawn today. If the amillennialist is right, then there is no future for Israel; the nation of Israel will never again be regathered; God will never again deal with His Jewish people; and, the world will never see Jesus Christ ruling upon an earthly throne as its supreme beneficent dictator. However, if the amillennialist is wrong, then he is chasing rabbits, and he is teaching people to chase rabbits in the things that they pursue as Christians.

This is where social action comes from. If the Bible says the world is getting better and better, then certainly that is justifiable reason that we should interpret that the gospel has social implications, and that we should pursue this as a church--not as individuals. We do have social implications as individuals to pursue, but this would say that we should, as a church organization, be pursuing social improvement projects. Consequently, this is what the amillennialist does pursue. This is the direction that his theology has taken him. Think of how many people are going to heaven with loss of rewards and with squandered spiritual gifts because they are seeking to accomplish something in this age that is not the purpose of God.

The thing that God is doing today in the age of grace is alerting you to the deficiency in your soul to be filled with doctrine. From that fulfillment with the Word of God, you are to erect a spiritual maturity structure in your soul. Having erected that spiritual maturity to a point of completion, we will enter what James 4:6 describes as the greater grace level of maturity that God gives certain mature Christians. This is the super grace level of the overflowing of the blessing of God where you are in maximum happiness and in maximum productivity that is God's purpose for this age. Out of that will flow the witnessing testimony to the lost. Out of that will flow the building up of the body of Christ.

**Our Primary Purpose**

The primary purpose of our age is not evangelism. The primary purpose of the age of the church is doctrinal instruction to the believer's deficiency to prepare him to do the work of the ministry. That's the primary calling of the church in our age. When we do that, we will be performing the job that God calls us to do. We will not be trying to move into a dispensation which is yet beyond us, and which we cannot now realize. When the tribulation is over, the millennium is about to begin. The thing that will guide the first action of Christ after He has returned to this world is judgment of anti-Semitism. This is why hatred, opposition, and persecution of the Jews is a very dangerous thing. This is based upon Genesis 12:3 where God promised Abraham that this would be how God would always feel about those who persecuted His earthly people. So divine discipline is inevitably reaped for anti-Semitism. Many of these judgments which will take place at the beginning of the millennium are God's bringing justice upon those who have opposed the Jew.

At the beginning of the millennium, there will also be the initiating of vast blessings of grace. God, of course, in eternity past has already sowed the seeds of the blessings of His grace which we as believers are going to reap in time. The greatest result of this sowing in eternity past of divine grace is related to salvation where the plan was made for the Son of God, Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, to die and to bear the sins of the world. The reaping of this salvation is positive volition expressed as faith in Jesus Christ. This reaping on our part of what God has sown will have eternal repercussions of blessing for ourselves.

Then there are the blessings and the millennium of the daily grace provisions. The doctrines of the Word of God will be widespread. The growth in spiritual maturity into the super grace level of life, which perhaps is uncommon today, will be common in the millennium. The blessings of grace are dependent as always only on who and what God is. During the millennium, these great blessings are going to be greatly multiplied. The whole earth is going to be one vast kingdom filled with a maximum number of super grace people. If you can imagine a world--a society--that's not just filled with people who have allegiance to the King Jesus Christ, but who themselves have advanced to a super grace status, that's the kind of people that are going to constitute the normal person in the society of the millennium.

Obviously, this has not happened today nor has it ever happened in the past. The whole world is going to be filled at the beginning only with believers who are loyal to the Lord Jesus Christ. At the start of the millennium, everybody who is an unbeliever is put to death. So the millennium begins with nothing but believers. These are not only believers, but because of the propagation of the Word of God and the ready reception of that Word, believers who are rapidly moved to super grace status.

**A Perfect Environment**

This will be the era, of course, of a perfect environment. We may compare the millennium in some respects to the first dispensation. Stage one was the stage of innocence or the stage of positive volition. You remember that God established that stage of the dispensation as a result of chaos that existed upon the earth. The chaos of the tribulation is going to be followed, likewise, in the millennium by a perfect environment set up by God. All that man needed at the stage of innocence was provided for him to make him happy and content. That's also going to be true in the millennium. Both eras are going to be based on man's positive response to the Word of God. In both periods, man is given the capacity to enjoy God and to enjoy what He provides.

Part of our problem today, because of the old sin nature, is that we struggle to be able to develop capacity to enjoy what God is providing for us. You are a fortunate and a rare believer if you find that it is true in your own thinking and in your own feelings that you can appreciate the Word of God; that the Word of God is something that you reach out and you readily welcome; and, that you look forward with anticipation to opportunities and times to be instructed in the Word of God. That is a sign that within your soul, there has developed capacity toward God which the average person does not have. Well, in the millennium, this capacity will be given to everyone. In grace, God is then going to pour out those spiritual and material blessings. He did this in the period of innocence. Man was provided everything that he needed for a home; for food; for recreation; and, for work. It was provided to overflowing in Eden.

It will be so in the millennium. Man has never possessed a higher standard of living than that which he possessed in the Garden of Eden. Never was he better related to other people, nor was he better related to God than at that point in the stage of innocence. That same condition is going to again exist in the millennium. There is a great deal of similarity between the innocent stage of the dispensation of the gentiles and the millennium stage. You're coming full circle--that from which man began and that which man spoiled--coming full circle back to where God is now restoring it, and restoring it even better than it was originally.

There will be conditions for maximum spiritual and material blessings which will again be repeated during the millennium as they were in the stage of innocence. The chaos of Satan's rule and of the old sin nature of man is going to be removed from this earth. The earth is going to be released from its curse which came as the result of sin. All of the characteristics of God's household are going to be rearranged during the millennium in such a way that they add up to perfect environment.

You may ask yourself: where in human history has it ever been true before, that since the Garden of Eden there has been perfect environment on this earth? Where in human history has there ever been a time such as the Bible describes where Satan is tied up? Just to give you an example of this amillennial problem, I once asked a minister, "Do you think that we are living today in these days where things are getting better? Do you think that today we are living in this wonderful golden age? Now Satan is bound in that age. How is it that Satan is not bound today?" He said, "Oh, I think you're mistaken. I believe that Satan is bound today." I said, "Well, if Satan is bound today, I'd like to know who's doing his work so well, because somebody is around doing it."

Now I realize what he was saying. He was spiritualizing, "Satan is bound." How is Satan bound? Well, Satan wants you to go to hell. God wants you to go to heaven. You believe in Jesus Christ. Satan doesn't have his way. You tie him up and you go to heaven. He was spiritualizing what the Word of God was revealing in Revelation about Satan being bound. That isn't what the words mean. You have to take the normal meaning of those words which means that an angel comes down; he takes Satan under God's authority; he chains him; they take him; they drop him into the pit of the abyss; they slam the lid on; and, they batten down the hatch for 1,000 years. That's what the words say, and that's what the words mean. If you reject that, then you're going to come up with all kinds of weird explanations and substitutions. That's the problem with amillennialism and Covenant Theology. It denies the literal interpretation of Scripture as the normal basic way to view the Bible.

Now the book of the Revelation is one that John, right off the bat, tells us is a signified (a sign) book. He signifies things. He puts them in signs, but they are signs which either he explains (he says now here's what this symbol means), or they are symbols which are explained elsewhere in the Bible. That's the way we handle the times when the Bible does speak in symbols, but that's not normal; and, when it is symbols, it is clearly evident.

So we have here on the earth in the millennium this perfect environment condition. It is very comparable to what the stage of innocence was. Obviously, since the era of innocence, we have never seen this kind of condition on the face of the earth.

**The Conditions of the Kingdom Age**

Let's tie it down to specifics. Here are the conditions during the Kingdom Age.

1. **No Religion**

Number one is that there will be no religion on the face of the earth. You have this described in Revelation 20 which tells us a strategic thing that takes place so that we know there will be no religion possible. In Revelation 20:1-3, we read, "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit (the pit of the abyss), and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent who is the devil and Satan, and bound him 1,000 years, and cast him into the bottomless pit (the pit of the abyss) and shut him up, and set a seal upon him that he should deceive the nations no more until the 1,000 years should be fulfilled. And after that, he must be loosed a little season."

Now you just read that in its normal meaning of its words, and it tells us that during the millennium, something very different is going to take place which has not existed in any other dispensation. That is, that there is no devil around. This is one time that people will never be able to repeat that famous phrase, "The devil made me do it." Everybody will know right off the bat that they're lying because there is no devil around to make you do anything during the millennium. Whatever wrong you do has to come from some other source.

Now religion is what Satan produces by convincing man that through his own efforts, he can gain favor with deity, whether it is a true deity or a false deity. Religion can be the worship of a false god as well as the worship of the true God. Most religion that you and I are acquainted with is the ritualistic approach of attempting to worship the true God. When we use the word religion, we're talking about attempting to gain God's favor according to certain things you do. You do certain physical motions. You kneel at certain points. You pray by kneeling. You don't pray when you're driving your car. You don't pray standing up. Or, you sprinkle yourself with holy water. You say certain things.

The other day some of you may have seen the television program of the only American soldier who was executed for desertion in World War II. He was executed before a firing squad. I think were about 49 men who were tried and convicted for desertion in the army. One of them was executed before a firing squad. He happened to be Roman Catholic. As they led him out to tie him to the post for the execution before the firing squad was marched in, he was going through his attempts to be sure that he made it with God. How was he doing it? He was repeating: "Hail Mary, Mother of God, Blessed art thou among women. Remember us in the day of our death," and so on. He was repeating it just as fast as he could. "Our Father who art in heaven hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done," again and again and again.

I said to the kids, "Do you know why he's doing that?" They weren't quite sure. I said, "Because he is practicing religion. And with religion, it is what man can do to make it with God. In a few minutes, that firing squad is going to fire; he's going to be out there in eternity; and, these are the last few moments. In his mind, the more 'Hail Marys' he can repeat and the more 'Our Fathers' he can repeat, the closer he's going to get to God with every one." And he was rattling them off just as fast as he could. What would you do with the barrels of the M-1s staring you down the tube, knowing that in a minute the signal was going to be given to fire? You'd be rattling them off if you thought this was how you were going to make it with God. Boy, would you rattle those things off.

You can go to China or to many countries of Asia, and they have prayer wheels. This is the same idea. They just improved it. You can write your prayers on a prayer wheel, and then spin it. Every time it goes around, a prayer has been offered to the god out there. That is religion. We don't have it in that kind of gross form. We dignify it. We put up candles. We tinkle little bells. We put robes on the ministers and turn their collars around backwards. They burn the incense as they stand up there at the altar. All of this stuff is of human origin and human produced. Now that's religion. Our society is permeated with it. The closer we get to Easter, the more you're going to see it in evidence.

There is a period before Easter called Lent. If you were a good religious person, we could go to church and ask for a testimony meeting. What would you do? You could all stand up and tell us what you had given up for Lent. This is because you think that you're going to make a lot of points with God. Ash Wednesday is the day after the Carnival--the Mardi Gras. At New Orleans, that's the last bash out. The next day is Ash Wednesday, and then it's the end of the line for all kinds of stuff. So for 40 days from then until Easter, you give up something for God. If you are a religious person, you could give us some very moving testimony of how you have now given up your bonbons; how you have quit smoking; and, how you have given up kissing girls. You've done all kinds of things that you have yielded for the Lord during those 40 days of Lent. But come Easter Sunday evening, and it's right back there with fun time again, and you're ready to go. That's what religion is--making points with God.

Now it's hard to imagine a society in a world where this is no longer here. Do you see the problem that the poor amillennialist has? Do you see the problem of the anti-dispensationalist? When have we ever had a world free of religion--worshiping false Gods with religion as well as the true God? Never, since man entered that first sin. Yet, there comes a time when the Bible says there's not going to be any religion. The reason for that is that the originator of religion, Satan, is going to be out of operation. Satan is seeking to bring glory to himself rather than to God. That's why he devised religion. When he is off the scene, as Revelation 20 tells us he will be, then everything that has been sponsored by Satan in the name of religion will be removed--and it's been some terrible things.

This includes some of the worst persecutions and some of the most terrible deeds. Just read the stories of the Spanish Inquisition and the horrors that were executed upon real Bible believing Christians in order to force them to come back to the Mother Roman Catholic Church, and to recant their faith in Christ. That was done in the name of religion, all under the auspices of Satan. When he is off the scene, all of that is going to go with it. Yet there are enslaved gullible people today who are persuaded that they can do something to appease the divine justice which they are someday going to face and somehow are able to gain the favor of God.

Well, with Satan in prison, the millennium is going to be a different situation. The demons are removed; Satan is removed; and, religion is removed. The commandments of men from Satan, which constitute the doctrines of religion, will be replaced by the commandments of God. Mark 7:7-9 tell us how religion today operates on the basis of commandments that men have invented. These include rituals and beliefs that men have invented. All of that is going to be gone when Satan is gone.

1. **Spirituality**

A second thing about this era of the millennium is that it will be a great era of spirituality. Let's look at a passage of Scripture that is a problem passage in some respects. This is because Peter decided to quote this passage on the day of Pentecost. The charismatics have a field day with this text. Joel 2:28-29 describe for us what spirituality will be like during the millennium: "And it shall come to pass (afterward) that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy. Your old men shall dream dreams. Your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit." There is a strategic word here in verse 28: "And it shall come to pass *afterward*." "Afterward." After what? Well, after what is described in the immediate context.

If you go back to verse 19, from verse 19 through verse 27, you will find the description of what God is going to do in blessing when He restores his people Israel once more to a nation in belief under His care. It is describing the condition that will take place at the beginning of the millennium when Israel is regathered and put into a position of blessing. Then *afterward*, after they had been regathered, will these blessings come. You notice in verse 19: "And the Lord answered and said unto His people, 'Behold, I will send you grain and wine and oil, and you shall be satisfied with them." These are descriptions of material blessing. "And I will no more make you a reproach among the nations."

Now you tell me. Since 70 A.D., when has the Jew not been the hind leg and the dog's tail in human society? When has the Jew not been an offensive element in the eyes of most of mankind? When has he not been a reproach even to this day? Do you think you could move through Arab countries today and read this Scripture and say, "My dear Arab friends, you don't understand that you must not view the Jew as someone against whom you must feel reproachful and antagonism? This is because we are living in the millennium. We are living in the wonderful days when God says that the Jew will no longer be an offense to anybody."

Now the amillennialists have got a problem because the Jew is still an offense as he has always been. But God says that the time is coming when you will no longer be despised; you will no longer be hated; and, you will actually be welcomed, respected, and esteemed for being a Jew. You will be looked up to, and you will be in prosperity. These verses that follow verse 19 describe the prosperity and blessing. Then you come to verse 28, and it says, "And it shall come to pass *afterward*." After this time when the Jew is no longer a reproach. Then this passage in Joel comes to pass.

What Joel is saying is that there's going to be a fantastic different kind of spirituality. Verse 28 says that it will be upon all. "It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My spirit upon *all* flesh." This will not only be true of the Jews, but it will also be true of the gentiles who live in the Millennial Kingdom. All of them, not just a few, will experience this kind of super outpouring of the Spirit of God. God the Holy Spirit will not only indwell every believer, but every believer in the millennium will be spirit-filled as the normal condition of his life. The very presence of Jesus Christ in full view of the people of the millennium will cause an ecstatic condition on the face of the earth. The worship of the Lord will become an ecstatic experience. Emotions will play a big part in the worship of the Lord because you will see Him.

What would happen to us tonight if suddenly before our eyes the Lord Jesus Christ would materialize and you recognized that you stood in the presence of Christ; you listened to Him as His disciples listened to Him; you spoke to Him; you questioned Him as they did; and, then He was suddenly to leave us? Would you be ecstatic? You'd be flying out in all directions. Most of us would spend the night awake, thinking it over, amazed at what we had seen.

For 1,000 years, people are going to look at Jesus Christ. Everything that they read in the Word of God and everything they've ever known will be fulfilled before their eyes. It's going to be an ecstatic kind of worship. That's what Joel was talking about. The Holy Spirit is going to turn loose such a joy and such an emotional outburst that it's going to be something marvelous to behold. However, there will be no religion and no Satan to take the emotion and twist it and distort it, making it something grotesque such as we find in the charismatic movement today, which is also loaded with emotion, but emotion in the form of religion. That's the difference.

The problem that we have here is that Joel 2:28-29 takes place following the return of Jesus Christ. It takes place at the Second Advent, and at the restoration of Israel. This restoration is when the Holy Spirit is poured out. As a matter of fact, this pouring out is preceded by certain signs which you have in Joel 2:30-32: "And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood and fire and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance as the Lord has said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call." Accompanying this outburst that Joel speaks of (of an ecstatic emotional expression of spirituality), there will be these signs in nature--these which will precede the signal of the return of Christ.

Here's another problem for the amillennialist. When has the sun ever turn completely black for a 24-hour period? When has the moon ever turned into blood? When have these things taken place out in space that the Bible describes are going to accompany the return of Christ, and the outpouring that Joel speaks of? The whole thing that Joel speaks of is connected way out there in the future right there at the beginning of the millennium and then continuing through that kingdom age. Until these things take place, the kingdom age is not here. What has happened is that Peter, on the day of Pentecost, in trying to explain to people what was happening when suddenly the disciples began speaking in foreign languages, Peter quoted this verse in Joel. In Acts 2:16-17, Peter says, "But this is that which was spoken through the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last day,' said God, 'I will pour out of my spirit upon all flesh. And your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.'"

Peter used the Joel prophecy, which Peter knew applied to the Millennial Kingdom, but he used it as an illustration of the Spirit's outpouring on the day of Pentecost. He was not saying that what was taking place on the day of Pentecost was the fulfillment of Joel. He was saying what is taking place today is like the thing that will take place in the future at the Millennial Kingdom. This was an illustration that is similar of what Joel was talking about. Now the charismatics have taken this passage, and they've ignored the fact that there were certain things that were to accompany this outpouring of the Holy Spirit that these things in Acts 2:19-20 describe for us. These things were to accompany the fulfillment of the Joel prophecy. Acts 2:19 says, "I will show wonders in heaven above, the signs in the earth below, blood and fire and pillars of smoke, the sun shall be turned into darkness, the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes." He's quoting, again, what Joel said.

Now did the moon turn to blood on the day of Pentecost? Did the sun go black on the day of Pentecost? None of these things took place. Peter is almost trying to hedge a misunderstanding by saying, "This is what Joel said about what's going to happen in the future when we're going to have these magnificent things taking place out in space with the planets and with the stars." What was happening on the day of Pentecost was the ecstatic fulfillment of the Spirit of God, and they were happy. They were very happy people during the period that there was the gift of tongues. It was an exhilarating experience. They were happy; they were joyful; and, they had the kind of spirituality that is going to be the norm in the age of the kingdom. However, Peter was saying this is only an illustration. He went on to point out that there are other things that are going to accompany the real thing when it happens.

One of the charismatic leaders was a lady named Kathryn Kuhlman that many of you are acquainted with. She was a lady minister. Hal Lindsay, who wrote The Late Great Planet Earth, justifies gibberish as tongues as God's way of authenticating the Word of God in our age. He just picks this out of the air as an assumption. He has declared that he watched Katherine Kuhlman in action and didn't see a thing wrong with what she was doing. The very fact that Kathryn Kuhlman stands up as a preacher, as a dispenser of the Word of God, to a mixed company of men and women, in itself, shows that she is not in the will and in the plan of God.

Kathryn Kuhlman preaches a sermon that is entitled This is that Now. She takes it from Acts 2:16 where Peter says, "This is that which was spoken through the prophet Joel." She says, "This is that now," meaning that the Joel passage is taking place in fulfillment in our day. Therefore, Kuhlman says, "We can speak in tongues. We do have these ecstatic expressions. We do have these emotional outbursts. We do have the healings taking place. We do have all these gifts that we have in the New Testament because 'this is that,' Peter says, 'now taking place,' that God has promised." However, she doesn't explain why these things that are supposed to take place out in space aren't accompanying "this is that now." So don't be deceived by that line of argument.

What is happening is that the charismatic movement is fulfilling religion because the master of religion is manipulating human emotions which is his favorite way of working on a human being in order to produce the illusion that God is working. This is the same illusion that the people in Matthew 7:22 will someday try to claim. They will try to argue with the Lord Jesus Christ, on the basis of their experience, that they deserve to go to heaven, when Christ says, "You're not even born again." They say, "We cast out demons; we performed miracles; and, we predicted things in the future in Your name. So yes we are so born again." And Jesus Christ is going to say, "No, you worked under religion. Satan was your manipulator. You were happy and you thought you were serving Me, but you were not."

That's one of the great things about the millennium. There will be a spirituality that is ecstatic, but free of the distortions of Satan's religious systems. Joel is predicting that that's the kind of spirituality that will exist. This passage was not meant by Peter to apply to the dispensation of grace. It applies to the dispensation of the kingdom. You can see why it's important to understand the dispensations. We'll show you a few more things next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1970

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