***The Age of the Kingdom, No. 4

DS11A***

We are now near the end of our study on the doctrine of the dispensations. We are looking at the final dispensation in God's plan of the ages which is the Kingdom Age--the 1,000-year millennial rule of Christ here upon the earth. We have indicated to you that those who are premillennialists hold that Jesus Christ is going to return physically to this earth before this millennium begins. However, there is another group of theologians call the amillennialists which constitute the vast majority of churches, and they hold that there is no 1,000-year earthly rule of Jesus Christ in the future.

However, from the Word of God we find that there is a golden age of mankind which is coming. It is an age which promises conditions that have never been fulfilled in the history of the world before. This millennium is going to resolve all of the social problems which have plagued mankind for centuries, and these problems will never be solved until the millennium. Men will continue to make efforts, but their most sincere and their noblest efforts are doomed to failure.

Israel in the millennium will be the superpower of the world. Jesus Christ will be the dictator of all the nations of the world. I hope that thus far you have begun to sense how important this doctrine is. A person cannot be spiritually oriented if he does not hold and use the doctrine of the dispensations. If you know this doctrine, you will know what to do if somebody comes up to you and calls on you to start tithing. You'll know exactly what to say from a dispensational point of view. You will know the current setup of the priesthood that God has in this world in contrast to the Mosaic priesthood which once existed. You'll know the supernatural means that God has provided for living in this age alone, and the issue of rewards for this age alone apart from the matter of salvation. You will know the important relationship between Jews and gentiles which you could not otherwise know. You'll know the place of animal sacrifices today and in the past. You'll know the place in the future of the Old Testament covenants with the nation of Israel. There will just be any number of things that you will understand just because you know the doctrine of the dispensations.

Well, when we come to the end of the age of the millennium (the end of the Kingdom Age), human history is then brought to a close. In this session, we're going to zero in on that part of the fourth dispensation--the end of the millennium. There will be, of course, a civilization during this period just as there has been before. There have been two civilizations on the world scene thus far in the pre-flood civilization and the civilization following the flood in which we live today. This civilization will end at the return of Christ, and a third civilization will begin--the civilization of the kingdom.

A civilization constitutes the total accomplishments of a race of people in a specific period. Very often what impresses man about himself is nothing to God (Psalm 39:5). After the civilization of the kingdom is at an end, there will be one more--that of eternity. You remember that each civilization begins with all believers. All unbelievers are out of the way. Each civilization except the last one (the one of eternity) ends in a cataclysmic judgment. The millennial world that we have been looking at, consequently, begins its civilization with all believers. These believers as the result of the baptism of fire are those who have survived. All unbelievers have been removed from the face of the earth.

**People in the Millennium**

Those who have survived in the tribulation (that is, they have lived through it) will be allowed to enter the Millennial Kingdom, but they will come into that kingdom in the same kind of a body that you have now. They will not have the glorified body that you will have as believers who have been raised from the dead. So in the millennial world, when it begins, there are going to be two kinds of people--those who are in their mortal bodies, and those who have immortal bodies (bodies which cannot die). Those in resurrection bodies as well as those who are citizens of the kingdom, those who will stand in their appointed place at the end of days (Daniel 12:3), both of these groups will constitute the citizens of the kingdom of heaven--those in resurrection bodies and those in mortal bodies. These in the immortal bodies are believers who have died in the dispensation of the Jews, and they have been raised. These will include people like Daniel, Abraham, David, and Moses. They'll be in the kingdom.

Then there are the believers of the dispensation of the gentiles who died. They have been resurrected. They're in the kingdom in immortal bodies. Then, of course, the Christians will have resurrection bodies as the bride of Christ, and they will be there. However, the Christians will not be citizens of the kingdom. The gentiles will be, and the Jews will be. The Christians will be co-rulers with the Lord Jesus Christ. Some of these citizens will have mortal bodies. Some of them, consequently, will have immortal bodies (resurrected bodies).

In those who are resurrected, there will be no old sin nature. However, in those who have not been resurrected and who still have mortal bodies, the old sin nature will be there. It is very important for you to remember that the old sin nature will still be there. Satan won't be on the scene, so there'll be less temptation. He will be gone and all the demons will be gone. There'll be less a temptation from the world. As you know, today we sin from three sources of appeal: first of all, from the old sin nature within us; then from the appeals of the world system about us; and, then from the direct appeal of Satan himself. Well, Satan is out, so that temptation is gone. Things will be considerably changed in the world. The whole system of entertainment; the whole system of education; and, the whole system of society will be brought to a basis of righteousness, so there will be far less temptation when you turn on your television set in the millennium than there is today. Far less. So the only temptation basically is what comes from the evil nature that continues within those who have not been resurrected.

Children will be born during the millennium, and they will be born, of course, in regular mortal bodies. Since they will have human fathers, they will also have old sin natures. There will be the necessity upon them, sooner or later, to make the decision to accept or to reject the visible Christ. Remember that everybody will see Christ; He will be there ruling; He will be on the throne; and, He will be visible to everybody in the world. These children who are born in the millennium will have to sooner or later go positive or negative toward the Lord Jesus Christ just as anybody in any other previous dispensation--faith in Christ (constituting salvation), or rejection of Christ. There will be a grace means provided for cleansing of sins just as there is today, and it will be possible to live a very spectacular spiritual life.

Now with these children coming along, there will also be a population boom. The population boom will increase the number of people in the world, and it will increase the people with old sin natures who need to go positive to the King, Jesus Christ. There will also be a population expansion because sickness will be controlled; there'll be no wars; no one will be dying of malnutrition; and, life span will be extended. Consequently, the opportunity for a longer lifespan means more people who will survive. One thing that you will not have in the millennium is abortion. The principle of abortion, which violates the destiny of a fetus to be a human being, is in effect murder today. It has now been legalized by the Supreme Court, but that in itself will greatly increase the population. This is a loathsome feature of our society. The more disoriented you are spiritually, the more you try to justify this as the woman's privilege, the woman's choice, and so on. We have come today where the trend is more abortions than births. That's one thing that will immediately cease in the millennium. The murder of the unborn will no longer be tolerated. This in itself will contribute greatly to the expansion of population in the millennial period.

However, economic conditions will also be controlled. We went through the steps last time for you, just to give you an example of how man has moved from one economic idea to another in order to try to provide plenty for everyone. Each one, including the free enterprise system, simply does not take care of everybody. So that's part of the problem--having food. The United States government sells monstrous amounts of wheat to Russia. Having been a communist country, no communist country is ever able to adequately feed its people. Consequently, Russia, embarrassed as she is, buys vast amounts of grain from the United States. However the point that's important there is that what is taking place in Russia is taking place every place. A very scary article in The National Observer this week is pointing out the fact that the United States no longer has these vast reserves of grain ourselves that we used to have. If we were to have a bad crop, we have in store enough food in reserve for 30 days.

So all of a sudden, you are seeing in the newspaper warnings about food shortages. One of the interesting things about the article was that the newspaper added a little notation at the end. It said, "Several years ago, we printed a series of articles on the imminency of an energy shortage. Few of you paid any attention to what we wrote. We call your attention to the article on the front page concerning the imminency of famine in the United States. We hope that you will not make the same mistake with this article that you made with the one on the energy situation, and that you will take steps within our government now to deal with this matter." How can you solve this? There is no way to solve this problem. You talk about social ills, we are getting the kind of social ills that people can begin to feel. We have one with energy. We'll have one in food. How are we going to solve it? Not by man's efforts. So it's another signal that unless the Lord Jesus Christ comes back soon and sets up His Kingdom and takes over the economies of the nations of the world, mankind is going to have a hard time being able to survive, apart from wars and the killing that he does.

There will be no generation gap in the millennium. Children will respect their parents, and they will respect the lines of authority. Things will be back to the way they were on the Old Testament principle. A son or a daughter who spoke rebelliously to his parents was taken out by the elders and executed. Lines of authority will be clearly once more established. You will not have this loathsome site that I viewed the other day. A parent allowed a child to get into a serious academic problem. And it was one that was clearly visible and of which we in our school warned these people of. Then on the basis of the fact that the child wanted to go someplace else to school, they permitted the child to have her whim. Last week they were back in a panic. They discovered drugs in the elementary school. They discovered that no sooner did this child get in, there like a fly to honey, she just gravitated right toward the worst kids in the class.

So they brought her back, and I had to say, "I'm sorry. We don't accept children back in this school once they have dropped out because they will not be able to enter into what we are doing, and it puts a burden on our teachers and our students." So what does the mother do? At that point, the mother should have given that kid a big swift kick and said, "Now we're going to straighten out this problem between your father and myself." What did the mother do? She said, "Well how about this school?" She mentioned another private school. The youngster said, "No, I don't like that. Those kids are mean." The mother said, "Well, what are we going to do?" This is the kind of thing that goes on constantly.

We're asking the kids, "What do you want to do?" And you have to be really insane. I mean you have to be out of your head as far as anybody can get out to have that kind of a problem that that particular home has, brought on by letting a child make decisions and then turning to this youngster and asking again what would she like to do? Finally she says, "Well I don't know." Then I did make a remark, and I said, "That's right. You don't know. That's why your mother and father are going to make the decision for you. You just go home and they'll tell you what to do." I don't know whether they did or not, but I'm hopeful.

**The Release of Satan**

Well the personal presence of the Lord Jesus Christ, in other words, is going to make the Millennial Kingdom a very very happy world. It's going to be a perfect establishment. You would think that with such a perfect world; with such a perfect ruler; and, with such a perfect political establishment, that everybody would be fanatically loyal to it. You would think that they would support this King; they would support His government; and, they would support this lifestyle to the hilt. Here is environment such as the world is trying now to create. Here they have it. But when we get to the end of this dispensation of the kingdom, near the end of the 1,000 years, Revelation 20:7-9 tell us that on the world scene is once more turned loose the personality of Satan. He is released from his imprisonment.

Now there has been no change in Satan's nature. There is no change in his ambition. There is no change in his methods of working. He has been sitting in the pit of the abyss for almost 1,000 years now, grinding his teeth; cursing; speaking blasphemy against God; and, just itching to get out and get his hands on humanity once more. Well, they're going to open the prison door, and he's going to jump out. With him, all of his hellish demons will be right behind him on his tail. His release is going to give the unbelievers in the kingdom one final opportunity to make a choice for or against the King and His establishment. All of these kids who have been born in the millennium have an old sin nature. Some of them have been rebels at heart, and they have rejected Jesus Christ as Savior. Now when Satan comes on the scene, from all over the world, these youngsters who have grown up in the millennium, mind you, gravitate towards Satan in such numbers that he is able to create armies all over the world once more. He gathers a following, in other words, of unregenerate human beings born during the millennium.

**The Final War**

Well the result, Revelation 20:1-9 tell us, is that international rebellion breaks out all over the world. The perfect environment and the perfect establishment have not overcome the old sin nature. These rebels are fully informed about what they are doing. They know doctrine. The truth about God has been dispensed in a universal way. Therefore, they know perhaps even better than Adam knew what he was doing. They are making a deliberate choice as Adam did in rejecting God. They have been blessed under Jesus Christ, but because of their negative volition, you have another situation of spiritual insanity.

So they attack with these armies the Lord Jesus Christ and the forces of righteousness. The iron-fisted rule of Christ during this 1,000 years has kept all open rebellion in check. Anytime anybody acted as a rebel, they got hit with the iron-fisted rule of Jesus Christ. Therefore, there was no open resistance and no open attack. Now all that is changed. Revelation 2:27 tells us about this iron-fisted rule. They obey the Lord out of fear, not out of love. They reject the truth, and they choose to believe the big lie spoken of in 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12. In other words, they are willing to serve Satan but not Jesus Christ. They are willing to be loyal to Satan whom many of them have not known before. They are willing to be rebels against Jesus Christ.

So once more, war clouds gather on the horizons of the nations of the world. In quick order, disarmament comes to an end everywhere. For 1,000 years, man has not been learning war (Micah 4:3). Now armies are being formed quickly all over the world, and weapons supplies are springing up. I don't know entirely how to account to you for where the weapons will come from except perhaps they are weapons which were already in existence for other purposes, such as for sporting purposes. But in any case, these armies will spring up; they will be trained in warfare techniques; and, they will be equipped with weapons.

Satan will lead these armies of unbelievers against what the Bible calls "the camp of the saints" (Revelation 20:9). The camp of the saints refers to the land of Palestine. They will besiege also, Revelation 20:9 says, the beloved city which, of course, is Jerusalem. In other words, these armies are converging upon the world's headquarters. They're going to go right after Jesus Christ. They're going to go right after His government. They're going to go right to the seat of power that exists in the world. Israel is the super nation, and Jerusalem is the capital of the world. So they zero in on the Jews in Palestine, and on the Lord in Jerusalem. At this point, Revelation 20:9--the latter part of that verse--tells us that the Lord Jesus Christ brings fire down from heaven and these armies go up in smoke.

**The Great White Throne**

So the last military battle in history is concluded with Jesus Christ as total victor (Psalm 33:10). However, before eternity can begin, there comes one final judgment. This is the judgment that the Bible refers to as The Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11-15). All of the unbelievers of all the dispensations are now brought out of the grave. They have been dead up to this point. No unbeliever has been raised. Now they are raised. They are brought out of the graves. Revelation 20:11-15 describe this judgment. These have no excuse. They have no justification and no ground of defense. Matthew 25:41 tells about their being cast into the lake of fire. Their record of human good, which is there in heaven, is of no avail (Revelation 20:12). Man has never been justified by his good works (Romans 2:4-6, Romans 4:4, Galatians 2:16). Those who have spurned God's offer of salvation by grace without works are going to suffer the wrath of God (John 3:36). No place will be found for them in heaven because God could not change their destiny now if He wanted to. Therefore, they are judged and condemned to the lake of fire.

So that ought to imply to you and me how important it is to be praying for unbelievers that you know (1 Timothy 2:2-4). Their situation is going to be very grim. Because you know what is coming for them, you should be very concerned in praying at least for those who are unbelievers: members of your family; friends; and, people in the circle of your employment and acquaintance. You ought to tell them the gospel message as you find it in John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:21, 1 Corinthians 15:2-4, and certainly Act 16:31.

At this point Satan, is again taken into custody. Now he is not simply put into the pit of the abyss. Now he is placed into that place that God prepared in eternity past for him and for his angels. He is cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10). You may compare that with Matthew 25:41. This sentence has been pronounced upon him in eternity past (Isaiah 14:15). He is already destined now for the lake of fire, but the sentence has not been executed. All of the demons and all the unbelievers of all dispensations will be cast into this lake of fire with Satan. So another civilization ends in catastrophe.

At this point, God takes one more move in preparation for eternity. That's described for us in 2 Peter 3:10-12 which tell us that the Lord is going to destroy the universe. With the destruction of the universe, every trace of evil and every defilement of sin will be removed. No trace will be left of the angelic rebellion by Satan and his demons. No evidence will be left of waging war against God. In other words, the universe is now an immense powder keg, and it is simply awaiting the igniting by the hand of Jesus Christ, and the whole universe is going to blow up. So what the Lord is going to do is take all of us out into space. He's going to set up a big set of bleachers and grandstands out there. Then we're going to have a big 4th of July celebration.

Creation, all of a sudden, will no longer be sustained by God. 2 Peter 3:7 and Colossians 1:17 tell us that the reason all of the created world holds together is because God holds it together. Ultimately man can examine and explain how things are reduced down to the size of atoms. However, what man doesn't know, the scientists has never been able to figure out why the atoms hold together. We don't understand why the atoms just don't blow themselves apart. We don't know why these little electrons floating around don't just fly off into space themselves. Instead, something holds up to the nucleus within the atom. The answer to that is the power of God. Christ who made the world keeps it together.

**A New Heaven and a New Earth**

At this point, He's going to withdraw that cohesive force. The whole universe is going to go up in one gigantic explosion (2 Peter 3:12, Hebrews 12:25-29, Isaiah 34:4). The whole universe is just going to blow up. Then He will create a totally new heaven and a new earth where sin has not stained the creation of God in any way. Time will cease with the end of the dispensation of the kingdom--time as God has created it. Now, time will go on as God counts time, which we have in 2 Peter 3:8. It will be a totally different relationship to time. All of the believers will see and they will survive this destruction of the universe. All of the believers will be in resurrection bodies at this point. So it's going to be quite a spectacle.

**Eternity**

Following the disposal of all unbelievers, and following the recreation of the heavens and the earth, the eternal state begins. This is a time of continual bliss. It begins for the saved with joy unending, but the eternal state also begins a time of torment unending for the unbeliever. Each one has chosen his own destiny, and each one now faces the place that God has provided for that destiny. Revelation 21-22 describe eternity to us in language which is limited because of what it's trying to describe. But we are not going to go into that here. The Bible does not tell us all that we wish it did about what eternity is going to be like.

Well, God has a plan of the ages. That plan has been fulfilled. God never lost track of His dispensations though men have. The story was: "In the beginning, God;" and, in the end God. And the ultimate goal is that God may be all-in-all. Psalm 8:4 indeed reminds us what we may all say toward our God, "How great thou art." And that is the last dispensation and eternity then begins.

**Covenant Theology**

Now with this key knowledge, you should be able to read the Bible and put its various pieces in an orderly fashion. Some people cannot do this for a very specific reason. I want to introduce you to something that you've heard references made to--the fact that there are some people who would have rejected everything you heard said and described concerning this period in history. Everything that you have heard said concerning what will be the end of the age of the kingdom is rejected. This is rejected by a group which holds a theology called Covenant Theology. What is Covenant Theology all about?

Well, Covenant Theology says that there are two covenants in the Bible. Covenant number one is called the Covenant of Works. The Covenant of Works is declared to have been made between God and Adam. In it, God promised Adam eternal life if he would obey God perfectly. That's the idea of the works. "If Adam's works were perfect," God says, "I'll give you eternal life," according to this view. Well, as you know, Adam exercised negative volition to God's requirement, and so he sinned. Consequently, the Covenant Theologian says that that canceled out the Covenant of Works. Bang. That was the end of it. So God had to come up with another covenant that he made with humanity, and that's called the Covenant of Grace. This Covenant of Grace is an agreement between an offended God and elect sinners in which God agreed to provide salvation through faith in Christ. The sinner would then accept it.

Some Covenant Theologians produce a third covenant and that's called the Covenant of Redemption. The Covenant of Redemption is viewed as the basis for the Covenant of Grace. The Covenant of Redemption is an agreement between the members of the Godhead--that out in eternity past, the members of the Godhead made an agreement to provide salvation with the Son as the sacrifice to meet the justice and the demands of righteousness of the living God.

Now, this idea of covenants is the basis of a biblical interpretation which ends up in a view of Scripture called amillennialism. Amillennialism is a system of viewing the dispensations; God's program of the ages; and, this kingdom age that we talked about here in a way that says that there is no millennium. The "a" is a negative--it comes from the Greek. It simply means no millennium. In other words, the amillennialist says that there is not to be any future kingdom on this earth.

Now these Covenants of Works and Grace are not systematized and presented anywhere in Scripture. That's the first thing you're going to ask. You're going to say, "Well, these are smart men. These are scholars. They are theologians. Where do they get this idea? Where does the Covenant of Works come in? Where does the Covenant of Grace come in?" Well, these terms, of course, are not found in Scripture, but that's not bad in itself. At least we as dispensationalists can point out that the term dispensation is used in the Bible such as in Ephesians 1:10 and Ephesians 3:9. However, the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace are terms which are not found anywhere in the Word of God.

**Oswald T. Allis**

Now one of the outstanding proponents of Covenant Theology was a scholar named Oswald T. Allis. Oswald T. Allis was an amillennialist; he was a reformed theologian; he held to covenant theology; and, he was a scholar of great repute. In an article which he wrote called "The Covenant of Works," he answers the question, "Where do you get from Scripture the idea of a Covenant of Works?" I'd like to read what Dr. Oswald says in answer to that question. Where do you get this idea?

He says, quoting from his article: "The relationship established in Eden has been properly called the Covenant of Works. That it promised life as the reward for obedience is not immediately stated, but it is made abundantly clear elsewhere, notably in Deuteronomy. The first Psalm is a poetical expounding of this covenant, and it has its counterpart in Romans 2:7-9." Now what Dr. Allis said is that this is implied in what you read about of Gods dealing with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The Covenant, as such, is not stated, but he does quote some passages of Scripture. He referred to the book of Deuteronomy, for example, in which he says, "This covenant is abundantly made clear notably in Deuteronomy."

In the footnotes of that article, he gives these passages: Deuteronomy 6:5; Deuteronomy 6:10-12ff; and, Deuteronomy 30:15-20. Now I will not read those here. I'll let you read those on your own. But if you do, you will find that every one of those passages refers not to heaven, as the interpretation is implying here, but it refers to the Promised Land and to God's blessings upon the Jew in the Promised Land. That's the first thing to learn about Covenant Theologians and about Covenant Theology. Words don't have to mean what they say. Now that's the key. Words don't have to mean what they say. So it's no problem here for this scholar to take verses that are talking about the Promised Land of Palestine and to apply them as if they were speaking about heaven.

You might say, "Well, Dr. Oswald, where do you get the idea for a Covenant of Grace in the Word of God?" And again, here's what he has to say about the Covenant of Grace. He says: "This covenant is first set forth cryptically in the words of the ... Genesis 3:15." The first expression of the gospel, that is. "Which promised Eve ultimate triumph over the enemy of her race. In this covenant, the emphasis is on faith. This is made clear in the wonderful words that are said of Abraham, "And he believed in the Lord, and he accounted it to him for righteousness," to which Paul appeals to show that Abraham was justified by faith, and not by the works of the law."

**A. A. Hodge**

Let me add to that. Another theologian, A. A. Hodge, writes: "As shown at the opening of this chapter, such a covenant is virtually implied in the existence of an eternal plan of salvation, mutually formed by and to be executed by the three persons." He is speaking of the Covenant of Grace in the Book of Genesis. Now what these men are saying is that the Covenant of Grace is not really revealed in Scripture as such, but it's something they deduce. It's not inductive study, where you put together what the Bible says, and say, "Okay, here's a category of doctrine." Rather it was something that they deduce from Scripture. It is not a clear statement.

Now dispensationalism has some specific dispensations named in the Bible. We know that there is a dispensation here and there that the Bible specifically names, like this dispensation in which we live. Therefore, we may make some deductions as we look at Scripture that there are other arrangements besides the one in which we live in God's order of His household. Here's what the covenant theologian is doing. He notices that there are covenants in the Scripture, and we have looked at those--the Davidic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, and so on. On the basis of the fact that covenants do exist, he projects the idea of a Covenant of Works and a Covenant of Grace. He deduces this. He does not get this as the result of putting Scripture together. He simply claims that Genesis 3:15 can only be understood that God was presenting a Covenant of Grace. But they say that it's hidden in form. You can't see it there, but that's what it is. All of the other covenants (the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace) are all in cryptic form so that the covenants that are there imply these two covenants.

Now where does all this come from? Well, it comes from a basis of interpreting theology. Certain principles of interpretation are followed, and they determine the conclusions that are reached.

**Literal Biblical Interpretation**

First of all, let's take a look at the way you and I believe the Bible must be interpreted--we, as premillennialists. In short, we think that the Bible has to be given a literal treatment. We have to use literal interpretation as the basic treatment of Scripture. That means that every word in the Bible is given its normal meaning and normal use. This includes (in interpreting) the matters of grammar and the matters of isagogics. We recognize that there are figures of speech and there is symbolic language, but these also are given their normal meanings. They have a literal significance. This is just the simple use of language and its normal purpose of communicating thoughts.

The reason for the literal approach is because this is what dispensationalists view as the normal way that God would communicate His mind to us. After all, what is the purpose of language? The purpose of language is to give you and me some definite ideas. Who made languages? God made languages. It's His message to mankind in certain distinctive languages. That's what we have in the Bible. Scripture cannot be some special use of language other than the way language is normally used. This is what the Covenant Theology people say: that what we say is true about languages, but, they say, "When you come to the Bible, that's a different kind of language. The Bible language is not a literal language."

Now they apply this particularly in the prophecies of the Old Testament. What does the dispensationalist do? The dispensationalist says that the prophecies of the Old Testament about Christ and His First Advent were all literally fulfilled. Every place that you read something about Jesus Christ in the Old Testament relative to His First Coming, how was it fulfilled? Right down the line, literally, in the details. There is not one example, and this is a bold thing to be able to say. There is not one example of a non-literal fulfillment of the Old Testament in the New Testament. Every fulfillment of a prediction in the Old Testament is absolutely literal.

Now this literal use of the language, obviously, must be, consequently, the way God intends to use language. Whatever He has said has always been literally interpreted and fulfilled. Now without the literal interpretation of Scripture, you can't be objective. There would be no way for a pastor-teacher to get up and say, "Now I want to tell you, as my flock, what God thinks in this verse. I want to explain to you what God is saying here in this passage of Scripture." There would be no way of doing that if we could not use the literal method of interpreting Scripture. Then the interpretation would be simply subjective. It would actually be what everybody thought. It would give full vent to everybody's fancy. It is almost inconceivable that anybody would even seriously suggest this.

**B. B. Warfield**

However, there is another great theologian, a man named B.B. Warfield, who has done some excellent work in other areas of Scripture, but he's a Covenant Theologian. I want to read something he said in one of his publications. He's talking about how to interpret the book of Revelation: "The ascertainment of the meaning of the apocalypse is a task, that is to say, not directly of verbal criticism but of sympathetic imagination. The teaching of the book lies not immediately in its words, but in the wide vistas its visions open to the fancy." Now you couldn't have a more accurate explanation of the Covenant Theologian's way of interpreting Scripture than by "the vistas of his fancy." Now how far are you going to go in learning what God thinks and says on that basis? Absolutely no place.

Now for this reason, we as dispensationalists use the literal approach principle, and we use it on prophecy too. In fairness to the Covenant Theologians, they use the literal interpretation approach on other areas of Scripture, but not on prophecy. In prophecy, they start spiritualizing, and the result is that they destroy all meaning of words. For example, in Luke 1:34, Mary is told she's going to have a baby boy. She says, "How can I do that? I've never had sexual relations with a man." Therefore, the implication is that this is a virgin woman. What do the Covenant Theologians say? They say, "That means that Mary was a virgin woman."

However, but they come to Luke 1:32, just two verses before, and the angel says that this child which is going to be born is going to rule from His father David's throne. The normal thing for you and me is to say, "Oh, that's the earthly kingdom of David ruling from Jerusalem." But the covenant theologian says, "No, you don't understand specialized interpretation. That's a spiritualized statement. That doesn't mean David's earthly throne. That just means his throne in heaven ruling over the believers." And you would say, "Wait a minute. I don't think I understand that. Here's one verse and you say that's literal, and two verses later you say that's not literal?" They say, "That's right. What's hard about that?"

Right away you sense that by that way that somebody can come to a statement of Scripture and say, "Oh that's ridiculous. That can't mean what it says." And this is what they do in the book of the Revelation. Who in the world is going to believe that one third of the sea is going to turn to blood? Who's going to believe that a third of the freshwater supply is going to turn to blood? Who's going to believe that the moon is going to be blackened out, and the sun is going to be blackened out; that a third of the world is going to be burned; and, that 200 million men will be killed in a battle? That's ridiculous. So it must mean that's symbolic talk. So what do you do? You spiritualize it.

Then, along comes the liberal, and he says, "That's wonderful." The liberal is brainy. He's logical. The liberal says, "I agree with you thoroughly, Mr. Covenant Theologian. That certainly does not mean an earthly throne. That means a throne of God's rule over humanity." And the Covenant Theologians says, "That is right." Then Mr. Liberal comes along and says, "Now if you'll excuse me, Mr. Brother Covenant Theologian, I do want to point out to you that here we must be consistent in our hermeneutics (that's the fancy word for interpretation). We must be consistent. And here it talks about this virgin woman having a baby boy, you know that's spiritualized too." And poor Mr. Covenant Theologian drops his teeth and says, "Oh no. That is literal. It really was a virgin-born child."

Now you see the dilemma that you have. What can the Covenant Theologian do? Oh, he gets himself into such a ball. He gets into such a tie up. He gets himself into such knots that you really begin feeling sorry for him. I want you to understand this--the kind of disasters that this non-literal interpretation of Scripture leads to. So we're going to spend some time on this next time and about two more sessions before we close this up, because I want you to know Covenant Theology and the problems that it creates. You begin with a certain assumption as to how the language of the Bible has to be treated. How you begin determines how you're going to end. You will find that no matter what a scholar a man may be, he will come up with the dumbest, most inane, and most ridiculous interpretations imaginable. He has just as big an IQ as you'll find anywhere. He is just as well trained in languages and in the Word of God. So we should look into that next time.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1970

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