***The Age of the Kingdom, No. 5

DS11B***

In our study of the doctrine of the dispensations, we have found that the final dispensation is the dispensation of the kingdom. This dispensation of the kingdom, we have indicated, is what all the Old Testament prophets were speaking of; were predicting; and, were looking forward to for the Jewish people. It was to be their marvelous golden age here on this earth with their Messiah Savior ruling over them--the Jewish people, regathered in their homeland and the superpower of all the earth.

**Covenant Theology**

This concept of Jesus Christ reigning as the world ruler from the city of Jerusalem over the Jewish kingdom and extending over all the nations of the world is what is rejected by what we introduced you to last week as Covenant Theology. Covenant Theology, briefly, you will remember, is the point of view that there are two covenants with which God is dealing with humanity. One is called a Covenant of Works which came before man sinned, and the other is the covenant which came after man's sin. This is the basic concept of Covenant Theology.

Consequently, after man sinned, God has one primary purpose according to this view, and that is redemption. Everything is woven around the concept of redemption. Consequently, there is no distinction drawn between Israel and the church. Israel is simply viewed as one stage of God's program of redemption, and the church is viewed as another stage of God's program of redemption. The true fact is that the Bible makes certain promises to the Jewish people which can only apply to them as an earthly people, and as those who are descended from Abraham, and these covenants have never been fulfilled. Also, it makes promises to the church, to believers, who are part of the body of Christ which were never given to the Jews, and which will have their fulfillment yet in the future in the program of the church--a totally different situation.

So Covenant Theology, by this concept of only two covenants, is forced to reject the concept of dispensational distinctions in the Scripture. Those who are in the category of Covenant Theology do not believe the Bible has distinctions of dispensational dealings, or different ways of life, for people in various ages. Most churches (most of the friends that you have who are Christians who attend church hither and yon) are in the class of Covenant Theology. That's why most of your Christian friends in the general denominational churches would tell you, "No, I don't believe in dispensations. No I don't believe Jesus Christ is coming back to be the King of all of this earth.

The thing that makes a difference between a dispensational theology, such as we hold to in this church, and a Covenant Theology is the principle (the basis) upon which you interpret the Bible--literally, or the allegorizing or symbolical method. It all revolves around those two things. So we pointed out that dispensationalism and an earthly kingdom age are what you get out of the Bible when you interpret it on a literal basis. Covenant Theology is the result of spiritualizing interpretation.

The reason Covenant Theology spiritualizes the Scriptures is in order to avoid this last dispensation--in order to get rid of a rule of Christ on the earth. I want you to remember that Covenant Theology came out of the Reformation. However, I also want you to remember that the reformers were literal interpreters of Scripture. When Martin Luther and Calvin and Zwingli began rediscovering truth which had been lost under the Dark Ages of Roman Catholicism, they approached the Scripture on the basis of literal interpretation, except at one point. At one point, they ceased interpreting the Bible literally, and went to the spiritualizing method where they took the words and said, "Those words have certain symbolic meanings," and that was in prophecy, or the doctrine of final things which we call by the theological word "eschatology." When they got to eschatology, they abandoned literal interpretation.

The reason they did this was because they saw nothing wrong with what the Roman Catholic church had taught in eschatology, and the Roman Catholic Church was teaching that Christ would never rule on this earth--that He would come back; it would all be over; and, there would be no kingdom. The reason the reformers saw nothing wrong with that was because this was not an area to which they devoted their studies.

You can certainly understand that after what had happened over the centuries, that when the Reformation came along, what would they be interested in? Well, the primary thing they wanted to know was how does a person go to heaven. Martin Luther wanted to know whether he should keep climbing those stairs on his knees saying his "Hail Marys" and "Our Fathers," or whether Romans was right that a man is justified by faith and not by works. That's the battleground that they came to grips with concerning the Roman Catholic Church. They did not give much attention at all to prophecy and to final things. Yet, because they were men of deep learning (they were learned men), they recognized that they could not follow the literal method that they were following every place else to rediscover truth lost in the Dark Ages. They could not follow that method relative to prophecy because if they did, they would come out with a totally different kind of eschatology than what they had learned when they were all part of the Roman Catholic Church. So without the literal approach to interpretation, you will come out with no Millennial Kingdom.

The problem here is that if you don't interpret the Bible for what it means at face value of the words, then you can have no objective study of the Word of God. Then it is not what the Word of God has to say. It is what you think those words mean. Consequently, under Covenant Theology and in the amillennial view of Scriptures which Covenant Theology gave birth to, there are all kinds of differences of opinion as to what a passage of Scripture means, particularly when it comes to the area of prophecy. When you talk to a premillennialist, I don't care what church he goes to, you will find that basically, if he is a premillennialist, he basically will have the same views that you do, as a result of taking the Bible for what it apparently is saying. However, if you talk to someone who is under Covenant Theology, almost every member in the church can have a slightly different point of view because it's up to the way he thinks and the way he sees the matter rather than what the words are saying. So the basic underlying difference, I want to make clear to you, between premillennialists and amillennialists is their respective principles of interpretation.

**Liberalism**

If you carry the allegorizing or the spiritualizing non-literal method far enough, you can see what this would do to the Second Coming of Christ. This actually bothers Covenant Theologians. They realize that if their method of interpreting is pressed all the way to its logical conclusion, what's going to happen to the Second Coming of Christ? It's going to become non-literal, and His coming is going to be a spiritual coming. His coming is going to be an influence that comes into your life, and that is exactly what the liberal has done. The liberals have taken the non-literal approach to Scripture, and the liberals say that the Second Coming of Christ is His spiritual coming into your life where He becomes an influence in your life. So liberalism has found its strength in the very thing that the amillennialists are supporting--the spiritualizing method of interpretation.

**Oswald T. Allis**

So let's look at the role of literal interpretation--the position of Covenant Theology on literal interpretation. In order to be fair to what Covenant Theologians think about this subject, it's best always to quote what they themselves have to say. One man who was a leading proponent (in fact, he's viewed as Mr. Amillennialism himself) is a man name Oswald T. Allis who wrote justifying the non-literal approach to Scripture as being the way that the Bible is to be interpreted. I want to quote from something he says on this matter of literalism. Dr. Allis says, "One of the most marked features of premillennialism in all its forms is the emphasis which it places on the literal interpretation of Scripture. It is the insistent claims of its advocates that only when interpreted literally is the Bible interpreted truly, and they denounce as spiritualizers or allegorizers those who do not interpret the Bible with the same degree of literalness as they do. None have made this charge more pointedly than the dispensationalists."

You will notice that he stresses the fact that it's the degree of literalness which is the difference between an amillennialist and a premillennialist. In other words, what he is saying is that the premillennialist is consistently literal except when he comes to something like in the book of the Revelation that says, "This is a symbol." But even then, the premillennialist looks at the symbol and says, "Now what does that mean?" That symbol has a literal meaning, and by studying Scripture and matching Scripture with Scripture, we discover what the meaning of the symbol is. Very frequently, as you know in the book of the Revelation, the symbol is explained right there. John will use the symbol and then an angel or someone will say, "Now here's what this symbol means," and it will be explained immediately. What Dr. Allis is saying is that he, and those who are in the Covenant Theology camp, do not want to go as far as we do in being literal. In other words, they want to be literal everywhere except in eschatology. They do not want to be literal when it comes to the matters of prophecy and of final things.

Another quotation from Allis is something that is a very interesting admission. Dr. Allis in another place says, "The Old Testament prophecies, if literally interpreted, cannot be regarded as having been yet fulfilled, or as being capable of fulfillment in this present age." Now that is a fantastic admission. What he has said is that if you read the Old Testament prophecies and treat them literally, if you take that literally, we know that that has not been fulfilled. Dr. Allis says it cannot be fulfilled even in this age of the church. So what does that indicate? That indicates that after the church age is finished, there is coming a period of God's dealing with human history where these things are going to be fulfilled. At that point Dr. Allis says, "No. No. No. That I cannot buy because if I go that literal, then I have to admit that the premillennialists are right, and there is a kingdom age on this earth coming."

Another writer is a man named Hamilton who is also in the amillennial camp. He is a very staunch amillennialist, and he says, "Now we must frankly admit that a literal interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies gives us just such a picture of an earthly reign of the Messiah as the premillennialist pictures. This was the kind of Messianic Kingdom that the Jews of the time of Christ were looking for on the basis of a literal kingdom interpretation of the Old Testament prophecies." You couldn't say it any more clearly. Here is a man who believes in the amillennial interpretation of Scripture, and he says, "If we are forced to interpret the Bible literally, there is only one kind of picture that will evolve, and that's the very one the premillennialists tell us about." He says that's the very one that the Jews were looking for because that's how the Jews interpreted the Bible.

I remember when I was a student at Baylor University and a major in the Bible department of an amillennial school. We were taught this very thing. We were also taught how the Jews persisted in misunderstanding what Jesus had come to do. They kept thinking that Jesus came to bring a kingdom upon this earth over which He would rule, and over which they would be the leading nation. The point was that the professors who were teaching us were just as wrong as they could be. The Jews, whom they were condemning, happened to be right on. That's exactly what the Lord came to do. Any fair-minded amillennialist will openly admit to you if the Bible has to be treated for its face value meaning, premillennialism is clearly what the Bible teaches.

There is no question, if you read the words for what they say, that Christ is going to set up a kingdom on this earth. There is no question that the Jews are going to be gathered from all over the world. There is no question that the nations of the world are going to come in friction with one another, and that the hot spot of that friction is going to be the Jew himself and the Jewish nation. There is no doubt in the world that there is going to rise upon this earth a confederation of nations of four main power blocs, and one primary leading bloc of the Western world of ten nations. There is no doubt about this if you take the Bible for its literal statements, nor any of the rest of the things that are revealed to us in prophecy. It's all going to come about just the way that premillennialists have for many decades been declaring that it's going to come.

So you can see that among us as premillennialists, we have a uniformity of viewpoint. Among the Covenant Theologians, there is not a uniformity of viewpoint. The liberals, of course, use this same view--this same non-literal approach to the Scripture--and it gives them a field day. They go much further, of course, than the amillennialists. The amillennialists are conservatives. The amillennialists, while they are ready to say Christ will not have a kingdom on this earth, they don't want to say that He was not virgin born. They want to be literal in everything except prophecy. However, the liberals don't care, and so they say, "That's a lie. Jesus Christ was not virgin born any more than He's going to have a kingdom to rule on this earth."

The liberals say that the New Testament Christians were ignorant in their faith and that their prophecies were mere Old Testament inventions--that these are just longings of the human heart that were expressed in the Old Testament, and we should not look to these Old Testament prophecies as being literally fulfilled. The liberals gleefully point out that they know they're right in that because these Old Testament prophecies have not been fulfilled. How are you going to deny it? You'd have to say to a liberal, "You're right. None of these Old Testament prophecies have been completely fulfilled." So the liberal says, "Well, you see, I am right then. We should not look upon those as being literal." However, we say, "What about the fact that, to the extent that Old Testament prophecies have been fulfilled, they have always been fulfilled literally, to the letter. Is it not possible that what has not been fulfilled is yet to be fulfilled in the future?"

Well, the amillennial Covenant Theologian recognizes this problem too. So he just joins the liberal and he discards all literal interpretation of Old Testament prophecies. That's his way of explaining why they were not fulfilled. He agrees with the liberal that they were not fulfilled because they were never meant to be looked at in a literal sense. So the problem of the amillennialist Covenant Theologian is how to save his theology. It is his theology that causes him to blur the distinction between Israel and the church and to seek to say that God has only one goal, and that is redemption.

That is not God's primary goal. God primary goal is to bring glory to Himself by all that He does because He is worthy of complete glory. We hold a distinction, therefore, when we see the word "Israel," we have a certain distinct concept of God's earthly people. When we see the word "church," we have a distinct concept of God's people. When we see the word "Jew," we think of somebody who is a Jew. That's who we think of. This is a very distinct idea. We think of somebody who's in the body of Christ, and we don't think of a Jew. It is a distinct difference. There is a totally different group. That all comes just because we let the words mean what they say. We don't try to distort them from their normal meanings. So God has more than one purpose in His various plans, and if we are faithful to the meaning of words, we will discover those various purposes.

Well, here is the result of literal interpretation. The people who are non-literal are non-dispensational. The people who are consistently literal in their interpretation of Scripture are the people who become dispensationalists. The text of the Scripture is accepted at face value. What has been unfulfilled is not spiritualized away, but is declared to be coming yet in the future. We recognize as literalists the distinction between the church and Israel. Therefore, this leads us to recognize that God has different ways of life, or different economies--different dispensations--in the Scripture. Therefore, we recognize that He has different stewardships. Sometimes the gentiles are in charge. Sometimes the Jews are in charge. Sometimes the Christians are in charge. Finally, Christ Himself will be in charge as the steward. So consistent literalism is the basis for what we have been teaching you for many sessions of the doctrine of the dispensations. The amillennial Covenant Theologian avoids dispensationalism only by avoiding this principle of literal interpretation. The plain meaning of the Bible makes it clear that God does have different stewards. He does have different ways of life, and different periods of time.

The result of the non-literal interpretation among the Covenant Theologian is that the covenant of grace idea leads them to interpret the Old Testament by the New Testament. In other words, they do not take the Old Testament and say, "Now, what is the Old Testament saying?" They go to the New Testament and say, "Where is the New Testament going?" Well, you know where the New Testament is going. The New Testament deals with the church age. The New Testament deals with a distinct breed of a new creation. It deals with a heavenly people with a destiny all their own. The Covenant Theologian looks in the New Testament, and he sees all this that has to do with the church. Then he takes the whole thing over and he slaps it on the Old Testament, and he says, "Aha, that's what the Old Testament means.

Now the New Testament does amplify and illuminate the Old Testament, but you cannot interpret the Old Testament by the New Testament. The Old Testament has to be interpreted on what it says, and the New Testament on what it says, and where we have indicated by God the relationship between these two programs. The two are not the same. You can't read back into the Old Testament what you find in the New Testament. If you do, you come up with that artificial system of interpretation which is known as Covenant Theology.

**Postmillennialism**

Now once more, what are the views concerning the kingdom? That's what it's all about. We told you that, first of all, there was one that was called postmillennialism. Let's review that for a moment. Postmillennialism was an idea that was proposed by a man named Daniel Whitby who lived in 1638 through 1725, the 17th and 18th centuries. He was a Unitarian, and his writings on the Godhead were burned as heresy. Whitby held that the whole world would eventually be won to Christ before Jesus Christ returns to this earth. To him, the millennium is the achievement of a worldwide conversion, after which Christ would come. So here was Whitby's idea--that there was going to be this situation here on earth where constantly humanity would be rising and things would be getting better because more and more people would become Christians until there was just one person left on earth who was not a Christian. And then he would be won, and that would be the end. That millennial period would then be closed. Here was the millennium under Whitby's view, and then Jesus Christ would return. That is, after the millennium, and for that reason, we use the word "postmillennialism" which means after the millennium.

The thing that was so very attractive about the postmillennial view was that it was fantastically optimistic. It was the very opposite of what people accuse us as premillennialists of being. When you're really ignorant of the Word of God, one of the things you will say is that, "Premillennialism is so pessimistic. I don't like it." This is as if somebody in some little church had come up with the idea instead of the fact that it comes right out of the Bible. The Bible says the world is going to get worse. Well, Whitby, the Unitarian, came up with the idea the world is going to get better. It's going to keep going up. Finally, everybody's going to be saved. Christianity will cover the world, and this general condition will result in the return of Christ. Sometimes this period of rising human improvement was viewed as a literal 1,000 years. Sometimes it was simply viewed as an extended period of time. Alright, that's postmillennialism.

This view, while very popular, got quite a kick in the head when the world lost its innocence during the First World War. When the First World War came along, the world left its period of innocence. Mankind was horrified to discover what its weapons of warfare could do, and how brutal humanity could be to one another. So it became very difficult for preachers to stand up and say, "Folks, things are on the upswing. Things are getting better. The world is moving ahead to a very wonderful golden age." Well, between the wars, some folks very valiantly held on to the postmillennial view. But when World War II came along, that was the living end. This is one thing that we may thank Hitler for. Whatever optimism was left in the world, he finished it off. Whatever hopes that mankind was improving, he put the ax to it for good. It took him the killing of six million Jews to do it, but finally he put to rest postmillennialism. So nobody in his right mind talks about being a postmillennial today.

**Amillennialism**

The result of the postmillennials was that they had to go someplace. So they went to a view which was now consolidated as it had not been before called amillennialism. This is the view of Covenant Theology. Covenant Theology crystallized amillennialism. Actually, amillennialism began in the fourth century. It was the concept of St. Augustine, one of the great doctors and fathers of the Roman Catholic Church. In this view, originally, as Augustine proposed it, he denied that there was any 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth at all. That's why we have this word "a," which in the Greek language means "no." Another way to call this is the non-millennial view. That's what the word "a" means. The amillennialist identified the millennium with the whole period between the two advents of Christ. So it's almost been 2,000 years. Augustine said the millennium is right now here on earth.

The reason he thought that is because he believed that Jesus Christ, upon His victory over Satan on the cross, had bound Satan. As you know, during the millennium, Satan is to be bound. So Augustine said Satan is now bound by Christ, and we are in the millennium now. Later, as the centuries rolled by, this view was changed. Augustine was calling this time right here on earth, from the time of the cross to the time of the rapture, he was calling this the millennium here on earth. After the centuries rolled by, this was changed, and the millennium was transferred to heaven. So that now you can ask an amillennialist, "Well, what about that millennial period--that period of great joy of peace and righteousness?" He says, "Oh yes, we're going to have a millennial period, but it's up there in heaven, not here on earth." So there's no millennium at all on earth before Christ returns. This is a non-millennial view.

In this view, because it flows from Covenant Theology with its non-literal interpretation of Scripture, Israel is not viewed as meaning the Jewish people, and the church is not viewed as meaning Christians who are in the body of Christ. The two are not distinct. They're all wrapped up in one ball of wax as God's program of redemption. God began His program of redemption with the Jews, and he worked it out finally, when He rejected the Jews, to completing it with the church. In other words, this view says that there is no future for the Jewish people. This view says that the Jews aren't going anywhere. This view says that the Jews will never be gathered together in their homeland. This view says that the Jews as a nation will never rule the world through their King, Jesus Christ. This view says that none of the promises which were given in the Old Testament to the Jewish people will be fulfilled at all literally. It just wipes them out.

This view did preserve the possibility of optimism. The amillennialist can still tell you that mankind can get together. He can apply his technology. He can apply his dedication if he has just the right kind of leader up there guiding the nation. The nations of the world can accomplish great things for humanity. Human problems can be resolved. The amillennialist's view preserves the rosy view of the world--the non-catastrophic end of the world--that made postmillennialism so attractive. So now this is what most churches believe. Most Christians hold this amillennial viewpoint. Consequently, most churches have to reject the doctrine of the dispensations, and they certainly have to reject that fourth dispensation--the dispensation of the kingdom.

**Premillennialism**

The third view is the one which we hold which is the premillennial view. The premillennial view of Scriptures is that Christ is going to return. We have the cross; the centuries of the church age; and, the rapture of the church. Then there is the period of seven years of the tribulation, and Christ returns to this earth with the church, and then begins the golden age of the 1,000-year millennium. Jesus Christ returns before the millennial age begins. Consequently, we say" premillennial"--before the millennium. This is in contrast to what the postmillennialist said--that Christ was going to come after the millennial period. So the premillennialist says Jesus Christ is going to come before the millennium. He will rule over a literal kingdom on this earth for 1,000 years. This will be a kingdom of righteousness and peace, and it will be a literal fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies.

It views the end of our current age of the church as a sudden and catastrophic end, as the result of the world gradually getting worse. So while the postmillennialist looked upon the world as getting better, and the amillennialist tends to view it with that optimism, the premillennialist recognizes from Scripture that humanity is going downhill all the way, and that things will never get better on any front in any way, but will constantly get worse. Any problem that humanity comes up with in social relationships is not going to improve but is going to get worse, particularly as we come to the end of the church age. Conditions are going to worsen.

Now this, of course, is the source of that attack that you hear leveled against premillennialism, that we are so pessimistic. Well, if someone says that to you, just be ready to point out to them that you didn't invent the pessimism. All you are doing is reading the Bible and passing on to them what God has said. If they have any beef over the pessimistic view of premillennialism, they need to speak to the author of that viewpoint and not to you. You should agree with them that it is a very pessimistic view. At the getting of this millennial age, the unbelievers are going to be judged with death; the living believers are going to be taken into the kingdom; the saved of all dispensations will be raised at the beginning of the millennium in various segments as part of the first resurrection; and, Israel and the church, under the premillennial view, because it is a literal interpretation view, they are separated distinctly, and they are not interrelated at all in any way. They are sharply separated.

The church is viewed as having begun on the day of Pentecost. The Jew is viewed as having begun back there with the call of Abraham. The millennium closes with a final rebellion which Satan is permitted to exercise with people who will join him against the ruler Jesus Christ. They are defeated. He is put down. Unbelievers are raised from the dead. They stand at the Great White Throne, and then, with Satan, they are all cast together into hell. Then a new heaven and a new earth is created, and the final civilization the civilization of eternity begins.

So here we have three views. In brief, this is what each believes. We have postmillennialism, amillennialism, and premillennialism. You have to decide which of these three the Bible really teaches. What do we find within the Word of God? This is a very legitimate and important question. Well, how would we answer it? Very naturally, one of the first things that somebody will think is this: If we want to know what God meant when He had this book written; and if we want to know what God's viewpoint was concerning these future matters--these future events, why not go back to the early centuries of the Christian church and ask the people there, "What did you understand as the teaching of the apostles concerning the reign of Christ on the earth? Was it a postmillennial, amillennial, or premillennial interpretation that you were taught by the apostle John, by Paul, and by Peter? That is exactly what we should do."

Those who have made a study of this--various historians--have made a very interesting observation when they have done that. Not only do we have what the apostles wrote, but we have fragments of writings, and sometimes extensive writings, of these who were the students of the apostles--those who were their disciples that they taught, who then passed on the information, and who we referred to as the church fathers. They were the post-apostolic group. Well, the historians who study the writings of the post apostolic group observe a very fascinating factor concerning the view of those Christians about the millennium.

**Adolph Harnack**

For example, Adolph Harnack, one historian, wrote an article called "The Millennium" in The Encyclopedia Britannica. He says, "Faith in the nearness of Christ's Second Advent and the establishing of His reign of glory on the earth was undoubtedly a strong point in the primitive Christian church." Historian Harnack says that when it came to what people believed after the New Testament church, it was the premillennial point of view. Another writer, Philip Schaff, wrote a book called The History of the Christian Church in which he says, "The most striking point in the eschatology of the anti-Nicene age (that is before the confession of Nicea was made) is the prominent chiliasm." The word "chiliasm" is another word for a 1,000-year reign of Christ. In the New Testament, in the time of the fathers, chiliasm was the word that they used for what we call premillennialism today. So he says, "The most striking point in the eschatology of the anti-Nicene age is the prominent chiliasm or millenarianism that is the belief of a visible reign of Christ in glory on earth with the risen saints for 1,000 years before the general resurrection and judgment. It was indeed not the doctrine of the church embodied in any creed or form of devotion, but a widely current opinion of distinguished teachers."

**Papias**

So what these men tell us is that, as they gather up the remnants of the records of history, they say that what they believed was chiliasm, or premillennialism. When we look at the records of the fathers, we have one man named Papias. Some of his writings are preserved. He tells us that the apostles Andrew, Peter, Philip, Thomas, James, John, and Matthew were premillennialists. Papias was a pupil of John the apostle. He was a second generation believer. He was a disciple and a student of John. He was a companion of another man named Polycarp. Polycarp was also a chiliast, a premillennialist. Papias is conceded by all scholars to have been a premillennialist. He also names other men, including John the Presbyter, who were all chiliasts. These people lived in the first century. These are from the first century. From the year that Christ went back to heaven to the end of the first century, the year 100 A. D., what did people believe? What were the leaders of the church teaching? Papias was on the scene before 100 A.D. Therefore, he knew what was the tradition and teaching of the early church.

**Clement of Rome**

There was another man named Clement of Rome. Clement of Rome lived from 40 A.D. to 100 A.D. He used certain phrases that reflect a premillennial viewpoint. He spoke of the coming of Christ. He rebuffed people who scoffed at the coming of Christ. He expressed hope "that He shall come quickly and not tarry." He promoted the attitude of every hour expecting the Kingdom of God--not that the kingdom was there, but expecting the Kingdom of God. These are expressions that reflect a premillennial viewpoint. They accord with that literal interpretation. We have another quotation from Clement in one of his direct writings of a truth: "Soon and suddenly shall His will be accomplished as the Scriptures also bear witness saying, 'Speedily will He come and will not tarry. And the Lord shall suddenly come to His temple, even The Holy One for whom you look.'" As you put together these phrases, you will recognize that they are looking for a kingdom which is to come. It is a premillennial view.

**Barnabas**

There was another man in the first century. His name was Barnabas. Barnabas live from 40 A.D. to 100 A.D. Barnabas taught that the history of the world would be completed in six millenniums. Barnabas held a view that all of history would go from Adam for six millennial periods. Then in the seventh one, he taught that Christ would return to this earth and set up a kingdom. For the seventh 1,000-year period, Christ would set up a kingdom. He spoke of seven millenniums, and he called them "days." Of course, we know that basically, as much as we can interpret chronology of the early days, that we have come through six millennia now. In other words, we are at the end of the sixth millennium. According to Barnabas's view, the seventh one, beginning around our year 2,000, would be the millennium rule of Christ on this earth. After this one came eternity. Now that is as premillennial as you can get. This was before the year 100 A.D. by people who were taught by the apostles themselves.

**Hermas, Ignatius, and Polycarp**

There was another man named Hermas. Hermas lived from 40 A.D. to 150 A.D., and he is conceded by all to be a premillennial. Another man, a very prominent man, was a man named Ignatius. Ignatius was one of the church fathers from 50 A.D.to 115 A.D. He was Bishop of Antioch. He spoke of the "last times," and he exhorted believers to expect Him. This was the attitude of a premillennial looking for the coming of the Lord. Polycarp, that we have referred to already, lived from 70 A.D. to 167 A.D. He was a disciple of John the apostle. He was bishop of Smyrna. In his writings, we read about the reigning of the saints after the coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the believers. Now that is as premillennial talk as you can get--the reigning of the saints after the coming of Christ, and after the resurrection of the believers.

The thing I want to stress is that, as we go through the first century, and I've named for you some very prominent church leaders from whom we have some writings preserved, there is not one single slightest breath of suggestion of the amillennial Covenant Theology view. There is not a breath of it. Everybody solidly down the line, of whom we have any records, is solidly premillennial. You can talk to any amillennialist; you can talk to Hamilton; you can talk to Dr. Allis; and, you can talk to any of them, and they'll say, "That's right. We look in the records of history that are preserved and we can't find a single amillennial or anything that even suggests it. All we find is chiliasts right down the line."

**Origen**

Well, the same thing happens to be true when we come down to the second century. We go through a series of people who are on the scene. Again, not a one of them in any way reflected an amillennial view. We get down to the third century of the Christian era, and then we begin to get the first amillennial suggestion. Do you know why? Because along comes a fellow named Origen, and Origen hated premillennials. Origen just hated premillennials worse than anything. He despised the chiliasts. And because he was a smart boy, he said, "I want to do those premillennials in. Now what is their point of strength?" He said, "It's their literal interpretation of Scripture."

So origin says, "That's how I'll cut the legs off the premillennials. He began teaching that the Word of God was not to be interpreted literally, but it was to be spiritualized. He was the first allegorizer of Scripture. Origen said, "Sure there are words, and they mean something. But you read those words, and then God shows you what is hidden underneath, and what the real meaning of those words is. Thus, Israel does not mean the Jewish people. Thus, 'David you will have a throne forever' does not mean a literal throne. Thus, 'Christ will rule over an earthly kingdom' doesn't mean a kingdom on earth. It means he will rule over a place of righteousness in heaven," and so on. Origen finished off the concept of exclusive literal interpretation of Scripture.

From then on, the Roman Catholic Church, especially when Constantine came on the scene and made Roman Catholicism the Department of State of the Roman Empire, from then on, eschatology went downhill and got lost in the darkness of the Dark Ages, and the reformers did not recover it. We're going to go into that in more detail next time as we tie up our study of the dispensations.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1970

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