***The Age of the Kingdom, No. 7

DS12B***

I want to remind you once more that a dispensation is a distinguishable economy or an arrangement in the unfolding of God's plan for the ages. It is a definite period in human history which is viewed from God's frame of reference. Each dispensation has a steward--someone who is responsible for that particular dispensation. Specific portions of Scripture apply to specific dispensations. If you take a portion of Scripture that does not apply to the dispensation in which you are living, the dispensation of grace (or also called the dispensation of the church), you can get into an awful lot of trouble and a lot of confusion concerning what the Bible actually teaches. So it is important that you understand the dispensational divisions so that you can take the Word of God that applies to your dispensation, and that's the rule by which you seek to live your life and serve the Lord rather than that which you brought over from someone else's dispensation.

The doctrine of the dispensations is taught both in specific Scriptures and in the nature of the content of the biblical revelation. Just as the Bible unravels itself, we see that God is doing different things. It is obvious that the order in the Garden of Eden was one thing which did not exist after they left the Garden of Eden. Things were different. Every dispensation has some changes: it will incorporate new things that were not true before; it will carry some things over from a previous dispensation; and, some things that were in the previous dispensation will be annulled and they will be completely cut out and removed.

The first dispensation was the dispensation of the gentiles. This extended from the creation to the Tower of Babel. The second was the dispensation of the Jews because Jews were now in charge and responsible in that dispensation. The third dispensation is the dispensation of the church. It goes from the death of Christ up to the rapture of the church when the church is taken home to heaven. The fourth dispensation, the one that we are now studying, is the dispensation of the kingdom. The dispensation of the kingdom is a hotbed of discussion because here all churches divide into two main categories. One group says, "Yes, Jesus Christ is going to return and pick up the Jewish nation, and there will be an earthly kingdom over which He will rule from Jerusalem. The Jews will be the leading nation of the world." There is another group of believers who say, "No, there is no future for the Jews. It is all over. The church and Israel are not distinct. They are one in the same thing."

The way you arrive at these two viewpoints, whichever direction you take, depends on whether you follow a literal or a spiritualizing method of interpretation. The literal interpretation of Scripture will lead to the premillennial position; that is, that Christ will come before a 1,000-year reign on earth. The spiritualizing method will lead to the amillennial position which says that there is no era of the actual physical rule of Christ on this earth. So the dispensation of the kingdom raises a lot of questions and a lot of debate between these two systems of interpreting Scripture.

I remind you that these are systems of interpreting Scripture. This is not just an argument over prophetic Scriptures, or particularly Revelation 20. This is determinative of how you will come out with the interpretation of the whole Word of God. In other words, what do you do, for example, with the Sermon on the Mount? You can get into an awful lot of trouble if you try to apply the Sermon on the Mount to the Christian in this age of grace. That's exactly what the amillennials do. One of the ways you can spot whether a church is amillennial or not is by what it does with the Sermon on the Mount. If your preacher is hacking away at you and telling you that you should be living under the Sermon on the Mount, you're listening to an amillennial preacher. And you better be careful because you're being led astray as to what the Word of God has for you in this particular age of the church. So it is important which of these positions you hold because they are not both right. One of them is very very wrong indeed. It all starts with how you approach the interpretation of Scripture.

The non-literal approach will produce liberal amillennials and non-dispensationalists. The literal approach will produce conservative believers and premillennialists. We have shown you that premillennialism is the older of the two. This was the original doctrine and viewpoint held by the church. For the first three centuries, there was no question that this was the view of the church. It changed in the latter end of the third century when the non-literal approach to Scripture was introduced by Clement of Alexandria, and particularly by his pupil, a man named Origen. This school of non-literal interpretation came up with some very fantastic absurd teachings which were flowing from their imaginations. One of the absurd teachings that came from the principles that Origen laid down of spiritualizing Scripture was the amillennial view.

In the early church, everybody was solidly premillennial. The apostles were premillennial, and the church fathers (those that they taught--their disciples) were premillennial. It was in the third century that you began finding something else. By the time we come to the fourth century, amillennialism has taken over because Roman Catholicism now is in dominance. Under the influence of the church father named Augustine, who proposed the amillennial position as the doctrine of the church, this position took over and premillennialism was pushed out of the picture and forgotten, and not brought back to light until about 200 years ago through a resurgence of an investigation and study of the Word of God. In other words, during the Reformation period, they did not recover the doctrine of premillennialism. That remained lost. They recovered other doctrines, but they did not recover this one.

This Kingdom Age here in the Old Testament actually begins with the promise to Abraham that we have studied as the Abrahamic Covenant. However, it even goes back farther than that. You remember that in Genesis 3:15, God promised that the woman's seed would produce a solution to the sin problem. The Abrahamic covenant simply took that promise and expanded it into a more definitive channel. It directed it specifically through the line of the Jewish people that that seed of the woman, which was ultimately Christ, was to be born to solve the sin problem. From the Abrahamic covenant came the Palestinian, Davidic, and New covenants, emphasizing and confirming the three major features of the Abrahamic Covenant, namely: that there would be a seed; that there would be a nation (a posterity); that there would be a land; and, that there would be a new blessing, that is, salvation through internal changes.

These covenants that were made can never be broken. They can never be terminated because they depend only on the grace of God. These promises were never made according to whether man behaved himself or not. However, God has other divine purposes besides that which He had for Israel. That's where the church comes in--a mystery, a thing unrevealed, and which God brought in as a stupendous tremendous thing. This was the result of the program of God from eternity past as the result of the rejection of Christ when He came to offer the kingdom.

**Revelation 20**

The amillennials say, "The trouble with you premillennials is that you built a whole concept of a 1,000-year reign of Christ on this earth, and you have built it on one verse (or a few verses) in the Bible, namely in Revelation 20. In Revelation 20, which we have studied before, there are indeed several references to a 1,000-year reign of Christ on the earth. In that passage, you will find that there is also a difference made between two resurrections. There is one resurrection of a certain group of people, and then it says for 1,000 years another group will not be raised until about 1,000 years is over and then they will be raised. Now the amillennialist says, "Well, the first resurrection is when you were born again. The second resurrection is when your body is raised." However, resurrection always applies to the physical body. It doesn't apply in Scripture to the resurrection of the soul.

Consequently, the amillennialist demonstrates right here that he is hard-pressed. He has a passage in the Bible where six or seven times it says 1,000-year reign. Now what on earth are you going to do with it? Well at this point, he has to spiritualize this thing completely out of the picture and say, "Well, that just means the rule of God in the hearts of men." They say that the idea of the kingdom is the rule of God in the hearts of men.

**The Old Testament**

Well, it is entirely a false notion to base the fact of the earthly reign of Christ only upon Revelation 20. Actually, what happens is that the Old Testament tells us all about this earthly kingdom such as we have found in these Jewish covenants, and it states that these things are dependent only upon God's performance. It says they will be performed; they will never be annulled; they will never be disposed of; and, they will come to pass. Now we take God at His Word. The things that the Old Testament described about this kingdom have never been realized by the Jewish people. Therefore, we say that this is yet in the future. Then along comes Revelation 20. The book of the Revelation, please remember, is at the end of the Bible. Did you notice that? The book of the Revelation is at the end of the Bible. All of you know that. If I were to ask you to turn to the book of the Revelation, you'd grab your Bible and you'd whip right there to the end. Everybody would know that Revelation is the last book of the Bible.

This is no accident. God the Holy Spirit could not have put that book any place else. Why? Because in the Revelation, you find things tied up that have been begun back in the book of Genesis. Lines of instruction are brought to their climax and to their finish. That book had to be at the end because that book presupposes that the person who is reading Revelation has the information of all the other books that came before it. You will not understand the book of the Revelation--it will indeed be an obscure book--if you don't understand the 65 books that came before it. That is the information that is climaxed in the revelation.

So there is not a great deal of explanation in Revelation 20 concerning the reign of Christ for 1,000 years with those who have been raised in the first resurrection (which includes us, as well as other saints of the Old Testament). Only believers are raised in the first resurrection. There is no great explanation because all of the Old Testament kingdom passages are presupposed as being understood by the reader. Therefore, when we get to this, all we say is, "Oh, we understand about the kingdom. Yes, we know that Christ is going to rule on this earth, but here we have the information given to us that it will be a specific 1,000-year era." There we find a timetable relative to the orders of dispensations.

Now this kingdom is going to go on into eternity. That's true. However, the point of the 1,000 years is that that is a final arrangement of God with humanity before eternity begins. It is an arrangement with saved and unsaved humanity. At the end of the 1,000 years, the kingdom on earth goes on in the new earth. However, the arrangement is only now with believers, and the dispensational aspects of God's dealings with mankind are at an end. By that time, God will have demonstrated that man is helpless to provide anything to make himself acceptable to God.

I don't care whether you're in perfect environment in the garden of Eden; whether God let you act according to your conscience like they did in the second phase of the dispensation of the gentiles; whether God enables you to have human government; whether you have a set of 613 regulations like the Jews had; whether you have great promises as the patriarchs did; whether you come under a time of intense severe persecution on the face of the earth as the world is moving to in the Tribulation; whether you have an era where Grace is accentuated and made the major feature; or, whether you have an era where the King Himself is on this earth ruling, it matters not what the condition is: every dispensation shows that man is a failure and he rejects God. Now at the end of the 1,000 years, that phase of the kingdom will be completed, and the new phase of the kingdom (the eternal phase) will begin.

What I want to do now is very briefly do for you what you would have to do in detail if you want to follow through on this; namely, that you read Old Testament books and discover for yourself how these Old Testament books keep telling us about this earthly kingdom to come.

I want to also remind you, before we look at this, that the time came when the Lord Jesus sent his disciples out to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Do you remember that? He sent them out, two-by-two, and He gave a very specific direction. He said, "When you go out, I want you to talk to Jews only. You are not to talk to any gentile. You only speak to the Jews this message." Why? Because it was an earthly kingdom. It was the Messianic Kingdom, and it only applied to the Jews. It was never given to the gentiles. The gentiles were only to be blessed incidentally as this kingdom was set up. So the Lord Jesus Christ finally came to the place where He said, "Okay men, we are now ready to go out. I am sending you out to different places, and you are now to announce to the Jewish nation that God is ready to set up the Messianic Kingdom."

Now there is one thing you will notice in that passage if you read it. That is that the Lord Jesus did not indicate that He had to give them any great instruction about the kingdom. He just told them to go out and announce that the kingdom is at hand. Why didn't He have to explain to them how this is a spiritual concept? The kingdom of God is within you in the hearts of men, and all that stuff that you hear today? Why didn't He have to tell them that? Because these men knew the Old Testament. They had read the prophets, and they knew exactly what the kingdom was all about. They knew that it was from Jerusalem; it was Jesus Christ; He was the Messiah King; He was in the line of David; He was going to rule over the nations of the world; there was going to be an enforced righteousness all over the world; there would be peace; there would be no war; nature would be subdued; there'd be no ferocity of animals; and, everything would be perfect environment once more. They knew it well. They didn't have to be instructed in what to go out and preach. The amillennialist ignores all that, but that is a very significant point. These men knew what to go out and declare because they knew from the Old Testament what these things were to be like.

For example, if you look in the book of **Psalms**, you will find that the book of Psalms in several places confirms an earthly kingdom. Psalm 45 describes the glories of the Messiah King--Jesus Christ is King. Now the Lord Jesus Christ is never presented as King in reference to a Christian. You will never find any place in the Bible where Jesus Christ is related to Christians as a king. Anytime you hear a preacher that uses that terminology, and suggests to you that Christ is our king, he is misleading you. Christ is only King of the Jewish people in terms of an earthly kingdom. Oh, it's a spiritual kingdom. It's based on righteousness. It's based on the constitution which we call the Sermon on the Mount. It is a very spiritual kingdom, though it is material in its aspect.

This is another attack we have by amillennialists, by the way. They say that we are so gross in our view of the kingdom. They feel that a kingdom cannot be spiritual if it is material. One of the writers I read gave the illustration of a group of preachers who were sitting around dinner one day and they were discussing the kingdom. One of them had proposed the concept of an earthly Messianic Kingdom. Right at that moment, a 200-pound fat preacher said, "That is ridiculous. You are making the kingdom so gross. The kingdom of God is spiritual--not material." Then he reached over and stabbed another big piece of chicken on the table. Somebody said, "Brother, are you a spiritual man?" He said, "Well, I certainly am." They asked again: "All 200 pounds of you, sir?" So even a fat chicken-eating preacher can be spiritual with all that material corpulence that he has. That is beside the point. It is so dumb. The amillennials love to do this: "Oh, well they can't be material. How could you have a spiritual kingdom here on this earth with Jesus Christ ruling over a throne?" They just get sweaty palms over the whole thing. It is just so offensive to them.

Well, that's exactly what the Word of God presents. The King Messiah is only a King over this earthly kingdom. Psalm 45 gives a beautiful picture of him. Psalm 72 describes in a marvelous way what His reign will be on the earth. Read it. Psalm 72 speaks of His reign on the earth, not his reign in heaven over some spiritual body. Psalm 89 describes the fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant by King Messiah.

You get to the prophet **Isaiah** and he confirms an earthly kingdom. Isaiah covers the period from his day all the way through to the time of the new heavens and a new earth. Isaiah covers a vast expanse of time, from his day out into the future to the time of the new heavens and a new earth which takes place after the 1,000-year reign of Christ on this earth. Because Isaiah covers such a vast area of time, there have been some idiots who have concluded that there were two Isaiahs who wrote the book of Isaiah. This is because you suddenly get to about chapter 40, and the whole tenor of the book changes. The first part of the book talks about judgment of the Day of the Lord and of the discipline and the judgments of God. Then, suddenly, you get to chapter 40, and the whole picture changes because Isaiah leaps across the centuries to the time of the kingdom here on earth. He describes the glories of the Messianic Kingdom. Naturally, his subject matter is different, so he describes it in a different way. His record is in a different expression, and that's why it sounds entirely different at that point--because of the subject matter.

So Isaiah goes from judgment and the immediate Babylonian captivity before the people right out to the glorious kingdom where the Jews are leading the world and the gentiles are blessed, and both of them under the King Messiah. He envisions a day when Israel's kingdom will be established above all the nations, and when knowledge will flow to the whole world from Jerusalem. Now you tell me. When has knowledge ever flowed concerning God to the whole world from Jerusalem? I don't mean just that they're putting out information from Jerusalem. I mean that the people of the world are rushing to Jerusalem to get the information. It's flowing out, and they're looking to Jerusalem for information concerning God. Do you think the Arabs are looking to Jerusalem for information concerning God today? I would remind you that the picture that Isaiah presents is a picture that is not temporary. Once it has been established, it continues forever.

It is Isaiah who tells us that wars will cease; that righteousness will be enforced everywhere on the earth; and, that the animals will be tamed. Do you know any time in the history of the world when there have been no more wars and when righteousness has been enforced? Wouldn't we like to have some righteous political leaders? Everybody's looking for righteousness in political leaders. Well, forget it. The guys that you think are righteous are only that because you don't know about them. They didn't keep tapes on themselves. If they had kept tapes on themselves, you would've found no difference between them. It's easy to be indignant and to be noble when nobody has a tape on you.

The coming Messiah King is going to fulfill the Davidic covenant, Isaiah tells us. This is a covenant which is spelled out to us in great detail. Also, Isaiah tells us that the Jews are going to be regathered to their land, and they will never be scattered again. That doesn't mean only part of the Jews. There is a big chunk of the Jewish people that lives in Russia and another big chunk of them that lives in the United States. All of the Jews everywhere are going to be brought back to Palestine, not just those here and there who may elect now to go back. Well, we never have had that condition. This can only be understood in literal terms in terms of this earth.

**Jeremiah** confirms an earthly kingdom. The first part of the book of Jeremiah denounces the unfaithfulness of the southern kingdom and foretells the Babylonian captivity. Then the book predicts the regathering of scattered Jews under the Messiah King from all parts of the earth. You can read through Jeremiah all you want, and you'll find that there is no declaration that the Jews are going to be gathered from all parts of heaven. They're going to be gathered from all parts of the earth together back to their land. The judgments of God upon the Jews are only temporary. The Davidic kingdom will be fulfilled.

**Ezekiel** comes along and he confirms the earthly kingdom. He deals with judgments and discipline on the Jews and on their faithless leaders. It is Ezekiel who gives us the vision of the valley of dry bones which represents the coming together again as a living nation--the Jewish nation. It predicts the regathering of the Jews to Palestine where they will no longer be at the mercy of the nations. They will be settled there in peace. They are told that they will be given a shepherd from the line of David who will take care of them in every respect. He gives us a detailed prophecy of the restoration of the temple worship on earth under Messiah King. Why would he give us the details of the restoration of the temple worship if it were something in heaven? It would be meaningless.

You come to **Daniel**. Daniel very definitely confirms the earthly kingdom. He reveals the course of the four great gentile nations that were to take place from his day to the end. He shows that these gentile kingdoms, at one point, are replaced by the kingdom of heaven--replaced here on earth where these kingdoms once existed before the kingdom of heaven replaced them. Daniel shows us that the Messiah King will rule over this earth.

We have 12 minor prophets, as you know. Every one of these, in one way or another, confirms the eternal kingdom of God. **Hosea**, who prophesied to the northern kingdom, declared the Jews a spiritually adulterous generation. However, he said that they would be regathered as God's people after the Messiah King arrived. Hosea said that after centuries without a king; without a government; without sacrifices; and, without priests, the Jews would return to God.

The prophet **Joel** also prophesied to the northern kingdom. He describes the dreadful day of the Lord, but along with it, deliverance by the Lord himself. He tells how the Jews are going to be spiritually cleansed, and they would be prospered as they dwell forever in Palestine. When have you ever known the Jew to be spiritually cleansed as a nation? Joel tells us that after that regathering, the voice of God will speak to the world from Jerusalem.

**Amos** spoke to the northern kingdom. He predicts the raising up of the tabernacle of David which has fallen down. Do you know what the tabernacle of David is? That is the Davidic kingdom. Joel says that the kingdom of David which has collapsed, which is what it is in our day, is going to be raised up again. Now when has the kingdom of David been raised up again since the Jews were dispersed? Never. Now the amillennial says, "Well, that means heaven. That means being raised to heaven." That is a distortion and a twisting of language. It is Amos who tells us that the land of Palestine will become abundantly fruitful. Amos says that the Jews, once they are returned to Palestine, they will never be removed again.

**Obadiah** says that from Mount Zion will come deliverance and holiness, and the Jews will enter their promised blessings. The land will be inhabited and the Lord will rule over them.

**Jonah** has no explicit prophecy of the covenanted kingdom of David. However, the story of Jonah typifies what Israel was called to do to be a witness to the world, and her failure. It illustrates her failure, but it illustrates the blessing that will come upon the nation as it came upon Jonah when he returned from his failure.

**Micah** was a prophet to the southern kingdom. He pronounces wars and judgments upon the Jews just as the other prophets do. He predicts a time when the kingdom of the Jews will be ruled over physically by Christ who will be there on the scene and who will be teaching the whole world. Christ the King will rule over the nations in such a way that there will be absolute justice dispensed. Peace will prevail everywhere. It is Micah who calls their attention to the fact that God is a capitalist. It is Micah who declares that, in that time when things are made perfect again in environment, every man will have his own private piece of property. He will not only have it, but Micah says that he will also be secure on his own private piece of land. Now these conditions are envisioned forever. It is Micah also who predicts the place where the Messiah King is to be born. It is Micah who declares that the covenant promises (earthly promises) will be fulfilled.

Then there is the prophet **Nahum**. He prophesied of the destruction of Nineveh. He calls attention to the messengers of God who would be bringing tidings of good peace concerning the kingdom.

The prophet **Habakkuk** is the man who made the famous declaration that became the rallying cry of the Reformation--"the just shall live by faith." It is Habakkuk who wonders how a pure God can permit evil to go on. Then, under the spirit of God, he sees the glory of God covering the heavens, and the earth being filled with the praises of God. He says, "The earth." That's the coming kingdom on earth.

**Zephaniah**, prophet to the southern kingdom, predicts Israel's coming captivity and the judgment upon surrounding nations. Zephaniah predicts the return from captivity of the Jews. He says that this will be a return that will cause them to be a source of praise for all nations on earth. It declares that the Jews will then experience no more evil. That has not been fulfilled.

The prophet **Haggai** predicts the overthrow of the gentile nations. He says that it takes place when Christ establishes His kingdom to rule on this earth as per the prophecy of Daniel.

Finally, **Zachariah** speaks of the Jews' restored earthly kingdom. Out of 14 chapters, 5 chapters deal very explicitly with a kingdom here on this earth. It predicts peace and security for every man, again, with his own private property. Jerusalem is seen as the focal point of truth about God to the whole world. Zachariah points out that after the great battle of the nations (which we know to be the battle of Armageddon), the Lord will rule the whole world.

Now what are we to understand by all this? All of these prophets have revealed that there is a kingdom coming upon this earth. You cannot read these Old Testament prophecies without recognizing that they're talking about something here on this earth. That's why, when Jesus sent out the apostles (the disciples), they had no trouble knowing what to preach. They were well-versed with the prophetic revelation. They declared it without any problem. However, the amillennialist has a terrible terrible problem. He has to take all of this and dispose of it by spiritualizing it. We've already shown you that once you start that, you will end up a liberal. You will reject the virgin birth. You will reject the necessity of the spiritual death of Christ for your sins and His blood atonement. You will reject everything right down the line.

So the Old Testament has deliberate repeated revelations of an earthly Messianic Kingdom. Prophet after prophet has added information to this earthly kingdom to be ruled by Messiah King of David's line. The Jews understood this in a literal earthly way, which is the way God the Holy Spirit meant it to be interpreted. The Old Testament prophets guaranteed that the throne of David in Jerusalem, over regathered and cleansed Israel, would one day reign in glory and righteousness under the Messiah King over David's house. The Old Testament prophets just guaranteed that it would happen. Yet, the amillennialists say that it's not going to happen. We have a lot of high-powered artillery in the Old Testament facing you to deny what these writers have said. The vision which was given to these prophets then is the background of Revelation 20. Revelation 20 is not an isolated text. When we get to it, because of what we know came before, we know how to interpret it. So this is not the rule of God in the hearts of men. It is not a kingdom on the inside of people. It is an actual literal kingdom.

What happened then? Jesus Christ came into the world. If this kingdom was literal, what did he do? Well, this is exactly what He did. He came into this world, and He offered the kingdom. However, as you end up reading the Old Testament, you will recognize that something is incomplete. None of this was finished. Suddenly, for 400 years, there's no prophetic voice. People living in those centuries well-wondered what had happened to all this that we had once been promised and that we anticipated.

**Matthew**

Then suddenly, the gospel of Matthew comes into existence. The gospel of Matthew is a completion of the Old Testament story. At the beginning of the gospel of Matthew, you will notice that the Lord Jesus Christ is identified as to His line of birth. However, His identification is rather strange. It is strange because it says, first of all, that He is the son of David, and then it says that He is the son of Abraham. You would think, to be logical, that God the Holy Spirit should have said that He is the son of Abraham and then, down the line, He comes to David and He's David's son. There was a reason for that. This was not a mistake. The reason He was first pointed out as the son of David is because He came, first of all, with the mission of presenting this Old Testament kingdom.

He came to present this which is the fourth dispensation that we have been studying. It was to come right in this age of the Jews. That's where the dispensation of the kingdom was supposed to come in. He came and made a very bonafide genuine offer. There was the promise of a king for David's throne. Up to the time that He came on the scene, none had appeared. There were certain characteristics which were described concerning this Messiah King: His miraculous power; His perfect righteousness; and, so on. None of the leaders in Israel fulfilled this. Jerusalem was to be the capital of the world. Yet, when Jesus Christ came on the scene, Rome was dominating the world, and the Jews were under their military control. The promise of peace and righteousness and security had certainly not been realized for the Jews when Jesus Christ came on the scene.

So when Matthew presents Him first as the son of David, it is because he is seeking to stress the fact that He came to offer this kingdom and to set it up. When He was rejected, then He turned to a second purpose that God had, but which had not been revealed, and that was to establish the church and the age of grace which had nothing whatsoever to do with Israel. That's why any preacher who brings anything over from the dispensation of the Jews into the church age is out of line. He is denying you the fullness of spiritual blessing anytime he does that and anytime you believe him, no matter how sincere he may be. Because the Jews rejected the promises to David, then Jesus Christ turned to the spiritual promises which were inherent in the Abrahamic covenant.

Remember that Abraham was going to be a blessing to all nations--a spiritual blessing in the form of the information concerning the new birth. This spiritual blessing to all nations was realized from the Abrahamic covenant through the death of Christ upon the cross and the out calling of a people for His name from among the gentiles. This is why you and I are under this particular phase of the blessing of the Abrahamic covenant. So Jesus Christ really electrified the hope of the Jews when He came on the scene and said, "Here I am. I am the king. I am ready to set up the kingdom. He was qualified on every account to do so.

However, the Jews failed in their spiritual preparation to receive the Messiah. They had different ideas as to how He should act and what He should be like. They expected the king to come in like Cleopatra moving into Rome to meet Caesar with great pomp and circumstance and ceremony. They didn't expect him to come as a little lowly carpenter's helper. That was a totally different picture, so they rejected Him. They dismissed His claims and His kingdom promises. They had a human viewpoint of an earthly kingdom, and that was the reason they rejected Jesus Christ.

**What If the Jews Had Not Rejected Christ?**

Now somebody I know is going to ask a question about this. Suppose that the Jews had looked at Him and said, "He is our hope; He is our Messiah; He is the one we have looked for; thank God, after all these centuries, here He is," and the nation had risen up, and they had swarmed down to the Jordan River to John the Baptist and said, "Baptize us. We are here by declaring our identification with the kingdom, and we accept Christ our Messiah. We are ready now to find God doing something in our hearts to enable us to conform to the principles of the Sermon on the Mount." Did Jesus Christ have to die for the sins of the world?

Oh, the amillennialist really loves to twist your nose on this one. He says, "You see, you are downgrading the cross. You are belittling the cross by suggesting such a thing--that that's the kind of a kingdom Christ came to offer." Well, I want to tell you that Jesus Christ came to suffer for the sins of the world. He did not come to suffer to bring the kingdom to Israel. He did not come to suffer to bring God's purpose in the church into being. He came to suffer for the sins of the world.

Now had Israel received Him, God would have had a different pattern by which Christ would have died for the sins of the world. He would have suffered. Everywhere in the Old Testament when the Messiah King is presented, how is He presented first? Always as the suffering Lamb of God. Then, secondarily, He is presented as the conquering line of the tribe of Judah. This is never in the reverse order.

So I can't explain to you exactly how God would have brought this about. However, His son would have died for the sins of the world; the price would have been paid; and, the kingdom would have come in. Now, of course, God knew what the Jews were going to do. He had it in His eternal elect purposes and plan that there was going to come another purpose that was to be fulfilled, and that the kingdom would not come here; but that the church would now come into being, and that this whole distinct age of the church would come into the picture. Now this is where the amillennialist gags. He just cannot keep from doing this. He just cannot keep from taking the dispensation of the Jews and the dispensation of the church and making it one ball of wax. He just cannot see that these two are distinct--totally different purposes--and that God is doing two different things.

Consequently, he says, "Well what happened is that God rejected the Jews, and He took all of the blessings that He was going to give the Jews and He has given them to the church." You say, "Well, what about all those curses? There are some pretty bad things they say in the Old Testament about what's going to happen to people who are not positive." The amillennialist says, "Well, those curses have been dismissed. It's only the blessings that we get. We don't get the curses." The kingdom was offered. It was rejected. Therefore, it was postponed. Where was it postponed to? Out here in the fourth dispensation, the dispensation of the kingdom.

Now in our day, when the church purpose is being realized, the kingdom of God does exist, but it exists in a mystery form--an unknown form. If you want to know some of the characteristics of the kingdom as it exists today, read Matthew 13. There is a series of parables that reveal to you what the kingdom of God is like during this mystery age (during the period of the church) when the kingdom is in a postponed condition. The kingdom is postponed. And here we are stuck with language, when we use the word "postponed." We don't want you to think that God was surprised at how the Jews acted toward His Son, and that God had to say, "Well, alright, we're just going to postpone that." That isn't the way it took place. God knew, of course, exactly what they were going to do. However, "postponed" is a pretty good word to convey the fact that God delayed what He would have given them.

By the way, you remember how he came the week before He was crucified. He gave one final opportunity. He came riding on that donkey. He came in full revelation of Himself, and in complete fulfillment of Old Testament prediction that He would come this way. He had all the final identifying marks to all the nation, and to its religious leaders: "I am the Messiah King." That was their last chance, and they rejected Him. The next time He comes, He is again going to come in a very glorious processional. You can read about that in the book of the Revelation. But this time, He will not ask them. This time, the New Covenant will come into play, and it says that it will change the Jews' heart, and they will turn to Him. They will have from within the recognition of Him as their Messiah. Those who reject Him then, and some Jews will, will then be put to death.

So the church, from the Abrahamic Covenant, replaces the postponed kingdom which was promised from the Davidic Covenant. It is a future thing. The church has a new purpose, but the kingdom Age is still coming. All I'm trying to do in tying this up is to show you that the Kingdom Age is not something that is here in the church. That's what the amillennialist does. He wants to take his whole kingdom age and stick it here in the age of the church during the last 2,000 years. That violates (I hope you have seen) all of the Old Testament Scripture. It violates everything indicated to us in the book of the Revelation as to how God is going to tie things up.

I have sat in very large churches here in Dallas, and I've heard preachers who have been speaking whose names (if I were to mention them), every one of you would know. This one particular man that I am thinking of is well-known to you. I was sitting in a service in this big downtown church, and I heard him speaking on the opening of the book of Acts concerning the Lord's ascension. The disciples turned to the Lord and said, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" And this very famous preacher said, "Now, you see, these poor ignorant disciples still hadn't learned not to be looking for an earthly kingdom.

I wondered as I sat there, if they were so dumb, why was it that the Lord didn't say, "How dumb can you get? After forty days of My teaching you, you're still looking for an earthly kingdom. Don't you know that there is no earthly kingdom? Don't you know that all this is in heaven? How dumb can dumb be?" But you will notice that the Lord doesn't say that. The Lord says, "No, I'm not going to bring the kingdom in at this time, but when it is to be brought in is known only to God the Father. I, in my humanity, do not know it, and in my deity, I won't tell you." So Jesus Christ told them that it was coming. But that isn't the thing. It's not for you to know the times and seasons. That's where we started back months ago in dispensations. Later, they were explained--times and seasons--that's what the dispensations are all about. They found where this kingdom is coming. Here's where it is. It's coming down after this age. There was a lot of information they didn't have at the point of His ascension. They were pretty blank concerning church age truth. The fullness of that came through the apostle Paul.

So the amillennialist is in a very very impossible position when you take the Word of God at face value. There is a kingdom age coming. Revelation 20 is not the only place out of which this is based. This is based on all of the Old Testament. Jesus Christ Himself did not rebuke His disciples for expecting a kingdom age to come. All of the covenants, particularly that Davidic Covenant that relates here to this kingdom, will be fulfilled in full literal detail. Now if you do not keep this information, concerning God's plan of what he is doing, in order, then you will fall into Satan's trap of denying yourself the enjoyment of the grace of God under which you live.

I would like to tie this up now, but there is another subject that I feel I must deal with you on. The amillennialist says, "Well, the trouble with you dispensationalists, who have all these different arrangements of God dealing with people, you teach more than one way of salvation." Now, you have a problem. Here's a real difficulty when the amillennialist comes up and he accuses us of multiple ways of salvation. As a matter of fact, this is the favorite attack against dispensationalism. This is one of the favorite ways of disposing of the fact that God has a different arrangement through the ages. So I think we should spend some time, which we will do next time, in tying that part up so that you will understand that.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1970

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