***The Age of the Kingdom, No. 1

DS9B***

You will remember that a dispensation is a period of human history operating under a distinct set of divine instructions. We have thus far seen that there are four such distinctive periods of human history. Each period has an identifiable steward who is in charge of that period. There are certain portions of the Word of God that are applicable to each of these periods. We call these periods the dispensations. The word dispensation means "a stewardship" or "responsibility." So we began first of all from Adam to the Tower of Babel with the dispensation of the gentiles which lasted about 2,000 years. Secondly, we picked it up with the dispensation of the Jews from Abraham to the cross. Then we entered the period of the church age from the day of Pentecost, and it will end at the rapture of the church. Then there is a small segment which belongs to the dispensation of the Jews--the third phase of that dispensation called the tribulation period which is yet in the future. Following that period, we come to the kingdom Age, the 1,000-year millennial reign of Christ here upon this earth. Now we're going to examine the point at the very tail end of the tribulation period on the threshold of the entrance into the kingdom age.

When the Bible speaks about the kingdom in the Old Testament, and it speaks about it very very much, this is the kingdom to which it is referring. When the Lord Jesus Christ came at His First Advent to set up His kingdom, this is the kingdom He was talking about--an earthly kingdom over which He would rule. That kingdom was rejected; it was postponed; and, it is yet to come. This is the Messianic kingdom. This is the kingdom over which David's throne is to rule forever. Jesus Christ is going to yet set up that kingdom; the Jewish people will be the main people in that kingdom; Jerusalem will be the headquarter city; and, all of the world will come to know the true and living God. It will be a totally different dispensation than has ever existed before.

However, before we enter that kingdom period, there is a stage of preparation, and that's what we're looking at in this session--the foyer or the entrance way into the kingdom period. In preparation for the Kingdom Age at the end of the tribulation period, there will be one final great invitation to salvation. The church is in heaven during this tribulation age. It's there preparing to return to earth with her groom Jesus Christ. The bride of Christ, the church, has been prepared for her marriage to the Lamb of God. She has been prepared by having her old sin nature removed; by being given a resurrection body; by the burning of all of her human good works; and, by the rewards which have been given to her for her divine good production in which she clothes herself as her righteousnesses. The marriage has taken place in heaven.

However, the wedding supper, which is to celebrate this marriage, is to take place on earth during the kingdom age. So the church has been raptured just before the tribulation began. During this period, the bride has been prepared in heaven for her husband Jesus Christ, and then the marriage has taken place. Now Christ and His bride are in a unique oneness of relationship. The earth, in the meantime, is being prepared for celebration of the Marriage Supper of the Lamb which takes place during this period of human history--the period of the kingdom.

It will be a 1,000-year festival, but before that begins, there is going to be a final invitation given on earth to humanity to attend this marriage supper. This invitation to attend this festival is in the form of the gospel. There will be a final evangelistic push made by 144,000 Jewish evangelists. This will be in fulfillment of Matthew 22:9-10 which speak about the provision of guests at this particular event. Christ will then return to the earth with His bride, and the opportunity for salvation will forever be passed. Anybody who was not saved before he arrives will then no longer have an opportunity to be born again.

So the last days of the tribulation are going to be very important days for what humanity is still left upon the earth. Angelic messengers will be sent around the world to announce the approaching return of Jesus Christ. We read about this, for example, in Revelation 10:5-6. This is the angelic declaration to the humanity which is on the earth at the end of the tribulation saying, "You people have a little time left. Now either get with it; either believe God; either accept Christ as Savior; or, suffer the consequences. The time now is very very short. Now that's a very very gracious act of God. We don't have that today. People are not being told today, "The rapture is going to occur very shortly," say, "in five weeks," or "in two weeks," or "in two days." Get ready. Make your decision. You have just a little time left." But in the tribulation they will be given that worldwide warning, "Christ is almost ready to return. Make your peace with God."

However, in spite of this, and the fact that all will hear the gospel in the tribulation, many will reject just as they do today. The result will be great remorse when Christ returns, and they realize what it is that they have neglected. You have this in Luke 16:19-31. Of course, once He does return, there will be no second chance. There will be no future for them except the eternity in the lake of fire.

While this final evangelistic push is taking place, the nations of the world are, of course, distracted and embroiled in the great campaign of the Armageddon battles. They will be engaged in this at the time that the final announcement of the return of Christ is being made. This campaign will be interrupted by the fact that suddenly, one day, all of the surface of the earth will experience an earthquake. The whole mantle of the earth's surface, the crust of the earth, will begin moving and rolling in an earthquake condition.

When I was in Alaska a few years ago, they showed me some movies of the earthquake that had taken place there, particularly near Valdez which was the epicenter of the earthquake. That was absolutely an unbelievable thing to see. If you can just imagine looking out here across the parking lot and across these flat fields that are around us, and suddenly imagining yourself down at the seashore where there was a wind and there were waves running up and down. Literally, right before your eyes, you just suddenly saw the flat earth begin to roll. It just kept doing it, just buckling up and down, just the very surface of the earth as if it were nothing but fluid water. This is suddenly going to take place all over the face of the earth. It's going to be again one of the gracious acts of God telling humanity, "This is for real. We are not kidding you. Christ is almost ready to return."

So the topography is going to be changed, and part of that change will be in order to set up routes of escape for believers who are entrapped by the hosts of the antichrist. At the same time, Joel 2:10 tells us that the heavens are going to be shaken, and following this worldwide earthquake, all of the earth will be covered with darkness. The sun will discontinue giving its light. Consequently, the moon will be blotted out; the stars will stop shining; and, there will be a blanket of darkness upon the face of the earth. Now talk about an energy shortage--they are going to have one like they never had before right then. However, humanity will find this no joke. It will be a night of terror. This total blanket of darkness is only going to last for one day, but it will be a night of terror. Only the believers who know what is coming will be anticipating that the power is going to be turned on within a 24-hour period. They know exactly how it's going to be turned on because suddenly Jesus Christ is going to appear out in space, and the whole earth is going to be illuminated by His glory and His presence returning with His angelic and human armies. You have this in Joel 3:16.

Well when this blanket of darkness falls upon the earth, it in effect is the curtain being run down on the final act of the tribulation period. That will signal that it's all over. The only time that will be left for unbelievers will be that period of a day while this darkness rests upon the earth for them to change their minds.

**The Second Advent**

The Second Advent of Jesus Christ refers to His return to the earth. Sometimes the Second Advent is called The Second Coming. Remember that this is different than the rapture. The Rapture takes place at the beginning of the tribulation. The Second Advent takes place at the end of the tribulation. These two events are similar. However, we refer to one as the rapture and the other as the Second Coming or the Second Advent so that we distinguish them. He does return actually to the earth.

**Environmental Problems**

Because there is an old sin nature in mankind, the earth has increasingly found itself having an environmental problem. Because there is an old sin nature in man, man has become a polluter. It is the most natural thing in the world for a person to be a polluter. All you have to do is watch the treat days, for example, that we have in Vacation Bible School, and see what polluters human beings are. This is especially so if the treat has a wrapper on it. When the whole treat is over, the wrappers are all over the ground. They're all over everywhere for somebody to go pick up. It's the old sin nature in man that has made him a polluter of himself spiritually as well as physically.

Mankind is living under Satan's control and Satan's direction. Satan is commander-in-chief today. He is trying to bring about perfect living conditions on this earth. As a matter of fact, in recent days, you are well aware of the fact that Satan has considerably alerted mankind to the pollution problem (and global warming / climate change). Satan is pressing as hard as he can to cause mankind to be aware of the problem that is getting out of hand, indeed, in some areas. It is getting out of hand because there is something in man that Satan cannot control, the old sin nature. It makes man a polluter, and it is now beginning to have serious effects upon the earthly environment.

So at the dawn of the millennial age, Satan's rule of society will be clearly a bust. All of his efforts at cleaning up the environment will have entered in disastrous failures. Any move that he makes to try to straighten out the environment is going to result in economic disasters on the other side. Consequently, in order to survive, mankind will have to swing back over and accept certain pollutions and certain mistreatment of the environment in order to be able to survive economically on the earth. Satan is having a wild wild time today trying to get things straightened out. This is in spite of the fact that he has many people in the United States Congress who are trying to help him do it. All efforts by the politicians today are generally proving to be failures, and they're going to continue to be failures. What efforts the politicians do make in our day, in this environmental problem, are contributions, in effect, to establishing the fact that there is in man something that causes him to be a polluter, and there is no human being; there is no human law; and, there is no society which is going to be able to straighten it out and stop it.

The younger you are, the more inclined you are to think you can change it. All of us can look back and see how we progressed from that same zealous concept of how we could change it to realization of the realities of the old sin nature. So we are living again in days when old solutions are being tried by younger minds who think that they have invented new approaches to old problems. One of the things that's going to be characteristic of this earth is that, environmentally, when Christ returns, it's going to be in bad shape. It is really going to be in bad shape. Everything today is pointing up to that end which, again, is indicative of how far the earth's system can go without somebody stopping it and straightening it out so that humanity can survive. Well it can't go very far in certain respects without somebody straightening it out. This indicates that the Second Advent of Christ has to be very close in order to accomplish that.

This return of the Lord was something that the Old Testament prophets knew about. We get a great deal of the information about the return of Christ and the associated conditions on the earth from the Old Testament prophets. The prophets didn't know anything about the church. They didn't know a thing about the rapture. All that was a mystery, but they did know very much about the return of Christ to this earth to set up a kingdom upon this earth. What they did not understand was when He was going to do that. They did not realize that He was going to come to set up this kingdom, and His nation was going to turn against Him and reject Him, and that the setting up of this kingdom was going to have to be delayed for a few thousand years until the church was built. Then he was going to come, and then He was going to set up His kingdom. But they did know about this kingdom. They had a great deal of information concerning that. So the church age was a mystery. The Second Advent was not.

**The Mount of Olives**

The Jews have eagerly anticipated this because it is a time of deliverance from oppression and from persecution. It is a time for the restoration to their Promised Land. As a matter of fact, they even knew exactly where the Messiah would touch down when He comes to establish this kingdom. Zachariah 14:4 very clearly says that when He comes, He will stand with His feet on the Mount of Olives. That Mount will split in two. It is common knowledge that there is a fault line in the Mount of Olives. This has been frequently pointed out by geologists. One thing that I can tell you is that the fault line will pose no problem to the topography of that mountain until Jesus Christ touches upon it with His feet. It will not split until that moment. But at that moment, it will break in two.

The Lord Jesus Christ predicted that there would be certain signs which would precede His coming. We have no signs preceding the rapture, but there are several signs preceding His coming to set up his kingdom at the Second Advent. You have this in Matthew 24 in what we call the Olivet Discourse. You may read about this in Matthew 24:27-31. Verse 27 points out that one of the things that will characterize the announcement of the return of the Lord will be extreme fantastic bolts of lightning worldwide.

Matthew 24:27 says, "For as the lightning comes out of the East and shines even unto the West, so shall the coming of the Son of Man be." His arrival will be announced by these bolts of lightning all over the world. Mind you, that the world will be covered in a blanket of darkness broken only by these fantastic flashes of a lightning storm. These, of course, are a preview of the glory of Christ who Himself, when He arrives, will illuminate the earth. We have this glory described in Revelation 1:7. But lightning is also the warning of a coming storm. So it is a fitting symbol of the fact that the storm of divine judgment on the unbelievers is about to take place. You have this in Matthew 24:28 and in Revelation 6:15-17.

In Matthew 24:31, we have announced that the Lord at His return will send "His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other. This will be a long-awaited summons by the angels of the believers who are left on the tribulation earth (Matthew 24:31). But this will be a call to both the living and the dead believers.

The church will view this event where God is gathering from the world His saints who have been in the tribulation who have believed and trusted in Christ. We have this in Revelation 19:11-16 describing what we will see as we accompany the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Conqueror, and He conquers the armies of the world upon this occasion who have gathered in the Armageddon battlefield. We have this in Revelation 19:15. You may compare 2 Thessalonians 2:8 with that. Revelation 19:15 tells us that the weapon of conquest is going to be the Word of His mouth; that is, the sword of the spirit which is the Word of God. That is the means by which He will be destroying the armies, and literally that's what He will do. Men will die as He returns from outer space.

There are two heavenly armies that return with Jesus Christ. One of these is angelic, and the other will be you--the church, the body of Christ (Revelation 19:14, Matthew 24:31). These two armies however will not participate in this battle. You will not be part of the warfare that will be taking place at the return of Christ. You will be simply observers.

**The Purpose of the Second Advent**

Now what's the purpose of the return of Christ to the earth? There are several distinct specific reasons that the Bible gives for the return of Christ at the Second Advent:

1. **To Deliver His Own**

The first reason is to deliver his own. We have this in Zachariah 14:3, 5. This includes these who are in the tribulation period who are believers. This is what Jesus Christ is going to do. He is going to come to deliver them from that moment of trial. This is reminiscent of Exodus 14:10-14 where the Lord delivered his people.

1. **To Judge and to Make War**

Secondly, the purpose of the Second Coming is to judge and to make war. Going back again to Revelation 19:11, we read, "And I saw heaven open and, behold, a white horse, and He that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness, He judges and makes war." The Lord Jesus Christ has omniscience. Consequently, He has all the facts to render a just verdict. He executes judgment upon unbelievers in perfect fairness, as John 3:18 warns that He will. So He comes, first of all, to deliver His own people, those who are believers. Secondly, He comes to make war upon unbelievers.

1. **To Solve the Environmental Problem**

Thirdly, He comes to solve the environmental problem. He returns to renovate the earth. He comes to restore the perfect environment to planet earth which has been ruined by man because of the old sin nature tendencies within man. In order to do this, He takes several steps. First of all, you have recorded in Matthew 24:37-42 the fact that He separates the saved gentile from the lost. We've gone over this before, and you're acquainted with the story of the division of the sheep and the goats. The goats are the unbelieving gentiles. They are removed from planet earth. The believers are the sheep. They are retained upon the earth, and they go into the Millennial Kingdom. The gentiles who are unbelievers are removed from the earth by means of what the Bible refers to as the baptism of fire. In Matthew 25:31-46, we are told that these people are put to death. This refers to gentile unbelievers being put to death at the Second Advent of Christ. In this way, Jesus Christ is separating the grain from the chaff. The chaff is taken out and burned while the grain is taken into the millennium.

Remember that the perfect environment requires certain kinds of people. The first kind of people that the Lord is going to remove from this earth are the unbelievers. Also the same will be true of the Jews. They too will experience the baptism of fire. For them, it's described in Ezekiel 20:32-38. The unbelieving Jews will be taken out and they will be put to death. The believing Jews will be permitted to go into the Millennial Kingdom. Then, in order to straighten things out in the environment, the Lord has to get rid of the character who's been calling the plays concerning the environment, and that is Satan. So Satan is bound and he's in prisoned (Revelation 20:1-3). Satan's ideas and his rule have ruined the earth's environment. Consequently, he is removed. His influence is totally removed during the kingdom period from the earthly scene.

This is the condition that is lacking today. We have all of these things against us. Number one, we have the fact that we have unbelievers on the earth. Unbelievers operate on human viewpoint. Therefore, unbelievers make constant wrong moves relative to improving the environment. Secondly, you have the old nature in believers and unbelievers. That is the source of pollution, and consequently, that is constantly expressing itself in one way or another. Then you have Satan who is free to try to use his limited intelligence. As intelligent as he is, he has a limited intelligence, and he is trying to bring it to bear to handle a worldwide problem, and he simply cannot come up with answers, nor can he control the people who are involved. The result is the scene that we see today.

So the Lord is going to remove all those elements, and one other thing along with that. Part of the problem that is upon the environment began way back in the Garden of Eden. After man's sin, God declared a curse upon nature. The curse upon nature is going to be removed. You may read about this in Isaiah 11, 35, 65, and in Romans 8:21. What this means is that the earth is going to be returned to its normal fruitfulness. This was the case before. Before sin, man did not have to work hard. If man wanted to grow something, he was always very successful. Everything went well. It was after he sinned that God said, "From now on, you're going to have a hard time raising enough food to feed yourself. From now on, you will eke out a meager existence to survive, and you'll have to work like a dog in order to get it."

Now this is the condition that is upon the earth, and this is part of the pollution that is in the environment today--the pollution of the curse that is the result of sin. Now this is going to be removed. Consequently, animals will no longer be ferocious (Isaiah 11:6-8). All of the natural resources that are on the face of the earth will join with technological advances for the maximum blessing of mankind. Technology will not be taking resources and using them against the blessing of mankind. It will be a coordinated effort which only Jesus Christ has the insight and intelligence to be able to supply. Man will consequently no longer have to work hard. He will no longer have to struggle to merely eke out this meager existence. So one of the reasons for the return of the Lord in the Second Coming is to straighten out the environment.

1. **To Regather and Restore Israel**

Another reason is, of course, to regather and to restore the nation of Israel. You have this promised in Joel 3:1 and in Zachariah 10:8-11. Now this is a long-standing promise in the Word of God. This is something that the Jews have looked forward to, and they have longed for, for many many centuries. It has only been in the lifetime of some of you here today that the first step has been realized toward the restoration of the Jew to his homeland. What is going to happen is that the people of Israel will be brought back by God, who will be their defender, and they will be restored to their land.

Now we have many promises from the Old Testament prophets that this will be done. Today, the Jew, at last, is back in his homeland. However, do not be confused into thinking that this is the fulfillment of this Scripture. This is not the fulfillment of what the Bible predicts concerning the regathering of the Jewish people. Today's regathering is a regathering in unbelief. This is not a regathering of the kind that they will have as described by the prophets where they will look to the Lord in faith. As a matter of fact, the Jew possesses only a small area of the land which was promised to Abraham forever. So they haven't begun to enter into the fulfillment of this promise as far as the area of land which they hold.

In the millennium, it is going to be the Jewish nation that will be the world superpower. You can hardly imagine that. The only way you can understand this is if you read the Word of God and you see where history is moving. So you look at nations like the United States, a superpower, and also Russia, which is mistakenly call a superpower. Russia is a rinky dink nation that would easily collapse if ever confronted by men who love freedom and a people who are willing to stand for freedom, and give the slaves of that country an opportunity to be released. Russia is not the superpower that she is portrayed to be. Be that as it may, the real superpower is going to be, of all people, the nation of Israel. In the millennium, they will be the center of the world's attention. Jerusalem itself will be the world capital, and all of the worship of the whole earth will be directed toward Jerusalem (Zachariah 8:23), because that's where the Savior God is going to be residing.

This is the kingdom of righteousness promised by the Old Testament prophets that you read of in Isaiah 32:1.

1. **Christ's Earthly Reign**

The fifth reason for the Second Advent is for Jesus Christ to establish His reign on the earth (Isaiah 32:1, Daniel 2:44, Revelation 20:4). All of the nations on the face of the earth are going to be ruled by Jesus Christ, and they are going to form His kingdom. This is what the Bible means when it talks about the kingdom. That's why you do not use such an expression as "bringing in the kingdom" to describe what you and I are doing in the church age. Anytime somebody says that they are engaged in bringing in the kingdom, they immediately indicate that they do not understand the movement of history; they do not understand dispensations; and, they do not understand the concept of the kingdom in the Scriptures, and that is a very bad thing to miss.

Satan understood this. He had no doubt at all about it, and that's why when he tempted Jesus Christ in the wilderness. He knew exactly how to approach the Lord. What did Jesus Christ come for? Jesus Christ came from heaven; He united with the body of that baby conceived in the womb of Mary; He became the god man; He grew up to be thirty years old; and, then He proceeded into a public ministry. For what purpose? His purpose was to present Himself on the basis of credentials that authenticated his claims as being the Messiah of whom the Old Testament prophets spoke. He said, in effect, to the Jewish people, "I have now arrived. I am on the scene. We are now ready to set up the kingdom of God upon this earth." What did He mean by kingdom? He meant that we are now ready to set up the city of Jerusalem as the headquarter city of all the world; we are now to put down Satan, to put down the demons, and to put down unrighteousness all over the world; we are now ready to remove the curse from the environment; and, we are now ready to establish righteousness all over the face of the earth--perfect absolute justice.

Christ was saying, "I have come to be your dictator. I am now ready to rule the world, and all the nations of the world will be under the authority of the Jewish nation." That's what Jesus Christ was saying, and Satan knew that that was His mission. So Satan said, "Listen, if you will pledge allegiance to me, I will hand over to you without a battle all of the nations of the world which I now possess." He did possess them. Satan possesses them today. Satan runs the nations of the world. Every nation on the face of the earth tries to find itself a good ruler. Every nation on the face of the earth is trying to find itself a responsible, honorable, reliable, intelligent, and imaginative ruler. The Bible says that God permits Satan to establish the basest of men as rulers of nations. That's who runs the nations of the world--the basest of men. They are not the elitist of men. The elitist of men know where history is moving. Satan knows where it's moving, and he thought that he could change that movement. He thought he could head it off by getting Jesus Christ to take the easy way out and to become ruler of the nations of the world.

When the Bible speaks about bringing in the kingdom, that is what it is talking about. The angel appeared to Mary and said, "Mary, you're going to have a baby boy. You're going to name him Jesus, and He is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies. He is going to be the ruler of this earth. He has been from eternity past, and He will rule from His father David's throne from the city of Jerusalem." Mary knew exactly what that angel meant. It was staggering. She could hardly believe that her baby was going to grow up to be the man who was going to run all the nations of the world as the supreme dictator of earth.

That's what the kingdom is. Today, as the Lord's ambassadors, we are testifying to the good news of eternal life which is available through Jesus Christ. We are building not the kingdom, but we are building the body of Christ. Every time you witness for the Lord, and somebody says, "You know, that makes a lot of sense. I believe it," you have added a living member to the body of Christ, and the body is just that much more complete. That is what you are building. The day will come when somebody is going to bring in the last unbeliever; the last person will be saved; the body of Christ as His temple will be complete; the body of Christ as His bride will be complete; and, that will be the finish of what we are bringing in. We are not bringing in the kingdom. We are bringing in the church and there is a great deal of difference.

So what the Lord is coming to do here, and the fifth reason for the Second Advent, is to establish his reign. It was denied Him the first time. His people rejected it, and God turned to the formation of the church. The second time, it will not be denied Him. So all of the nations of the earth are going to be ruled by Him. The will of Christ will be done on earth as it is done in heaven. He will be absolute ruler. He will be a loving dictator. He will be a political leader functioning, if you can imagine such a thing, on the basis of the essence of God. Isn't that something--a political leader who functions on the essence of God? The closest we could have to this today is a political leader who operates on massive understanding of doctrine. That's the closest you could come to the kind of a ruler that Jesus Christ is going to be.

The reason you couldn't have political leadership which is operating on massive Bible doctrine understanding is because Satan would not let that person come into a position of authority. Satan would always hedge this off. He would always preclude this. That does not work to his interests, and he is the one who calls the plays. He is the final decider of who wins elections.

So we come to the fulfillment of this event so long promised--the Second Coming of Christ--so long anticipated. Our day, and especially the tribulation day, can be compared to Noah's day in Matthew 24:37-39, we have described how people in Noah's day did not take seriously what Noah was saying. Noah was a fanatic about the flood. Everywhere he went, he kept talking about the flood. He was the kind of a nut who talked about water coming from the sky which everybody knew couldn't happen because it never had happened before. It had never rained, and this nut was talking about water coming from the sky--water that was going to cover the highest mountain. But Noah was a fanatic about the flood. People scoffed at him. If they were young people they were very arrogant, and they were very contemptuous of him. But Noah kept the faith, and he kept building the ark. The time came when all the older folks and all the younger folks discovered how right he was and how wrong they were.

Today people are merrily going along their way in the same way. They don't realize that they're in spiritual darkness. Do you realize what darkness envelops your soul? The only way to remove that darkness is with the splinters of light that doctrine introduces into your soul. When you get hold of that, dear friend, you become a fanatic for the Word of God like Noah was. You become a fanatic for the Word of God because every piece of doctrine you get is a splinter of light that breaks away your darkness. The question that I've had posed to me goes something like this: "Why did it take me so long to wake up to this, and start becoming an enthusiast for the Word of God?" The answer is because you didn't know how bad off you were. That's what people discover. They realize the darkness that's in their soul. When they wake up, they wonder, "Why wasn't I aware that I was groping my way?" Once you become enlightened, you'll look back there and you'll see what this passage means about people in Noah's day merrily going along their way, thinking they're in enlightenment, and not realizing the condition that surrounds them.

So apostasy is rampant. Our moral values today are in a nosedive. The laws of establishment are under vicious attack, and people move in darkness because of their ignorance of doctrine and of the ignorance of divine viewpoint. Incidentally, I want to say a word for the preachers concerning this. I realize that people are in darkness because of pastors, but I also want to point out that one of the reasons, in sympathy with pastors, that they leave people in darkness is because part of the darkness is disorientation as to what the local church is all about. So the average poor pastor is so burdened with all kinds of things that he is expected to take over; to ramrod; and, to pass judgments on, that that poor guy does not have enough time to be able to collect his thoughts in order to study the Word of God. So a word of sympathy for the pastors is that most congregations don't know that they are in darkness. Consequently, they pick up from all the other darkened churches what a preacher should do. Almost always they come up with wrong answers.

Well, the Second Advent events are very exciting. They begin with this earthquake. It shakes the city of Jerusalem. The Mount of Olives splits. Jerusalem apparently becomes a seaport then (Zachariah 14:4-5). These events scare the armies of Armageddon which are battling, so the fighting stops. Darkness covers the world for this one day (Zachariah 14:6-7). Then Jesus Christ suddenly appears in space after the earthquake in a burst of light. Everybody on earth sees Him (Revelation 1:7). The unbelievers on the earth go crazy in a frenzy to escape someplace. His appearance is a very awesome appearance. It's described in Revelation 19:11-16. In Isaiah 63:1-4, we have two questions posed which add to the information that we have as to what Jesus Christ will look like when He appears: "Who is this that comes from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah? This, that is glorious in His apparel, traveling in the greatness of His strength, who speaks in righteousness mighty to save?"

Bozrah is coming from the direction of Edom. The Edomites were from Esau, the brother of Jacob, and they were the sworn enemies of the Jews. They represent the spirit of anti-Semitism. God always judges anti-Semitism as we find in Genesis 12:3. So the Edomites have been destined for judgment because of their treatment of the Jews (Amos 1:11). Who is the rider who is bringing this judgment? Well, the rider, of course, is Jesus Christ. Isaiah 63:2 says, "Why are you red in your apparel, and your garments like him who treads in a winefat? I have trodden the winepress alone, and of the people there was none with me. For I will tread them in my anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled upon my garments, and I will stain all my raiment. For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redeemed is come."

This is describing how Jesus Christ is going to look when He comes in His Second Advent. He is dressed in a bloodstained robe which means that He has been engaged in war. War with whom? This is a war which, incidentally, here Isaiah in verse 3 calls "glorious." It is a just war, and therefore it is in the will of God. His stained robes are likened to the person who is stomping out grapes in a vat in order to make wine, and the bottom of his garment gets splattered by the grape juice. The Lord Jesus Christ has been tramping out in the vat of His enemies. Who are His enemies? These armies which are gathered on the field of battle of Armageddon. These are the people to whom the evangelists have been saying, "He's almost coming. He's almost here." And they rejected.

So the Lord Jesus Christ, with the power of His Word, slays them. Literally millions are killed on the field of battle. Incidentally, the two armies, the angels and the church which come with Him, are not engaged in this battle. You can read of this same scene in Revelation 14:14-20. So this takes place outside of the city of Jerusalem (Revelation 14:20). The Lord battles for His people as he deals with the anti-Semitism of Edom--the anti-Semitism that has existed in the world at that time. The streets begin flowing with blood (Zachariah 14:3). This flow of blood turns into a river. As a matter of fact, it moves into a gully, and then it fills it up to the height of a horse's bridle. If you can imagine a horse standing up--where his bridle comes--the blood will rise in this gully to that point. The gully will be moving northward toward the northern border of Palestine, and it will run for 176 miles--176 miles of blood. Where is the blood coming from? It is coming from the corpses surrounding the city of Jerusalem, and the blood is pouring out of those bodies down into that gully; it is filling up the stream; and, a river of blood is forming going north.

That is righteous, wrathful, divine judgment, and this is no pretense. This is the Savior who for so long held back judgment but was rejected. This is the Savior who was spoken of contemptuously in 2 Peter 3:4-10 as to why things were going on the way they always have and they always would. But the God of grace and love is also a God of wrath. So a holy war takes place, and I want you to notice that there is no negotiated peace. This is a thing of unconditional surrender. It is definite victory. When Jesus Christ finishes on this field of battle, it will be unconditional decisive victory. That is the Bible way to fight a war.

So He finishes this, but he also sets His soldiers on a mopping up operation. You have this in Zachariah 10:5-7. Vast numbers of bodies, of course, are lying all over the countryside now, and this is a frightful sight (Isaiah 34:3). So somebody has to clean it up. Guess who the burial party is. This is bad duty. Somebody has to clean up. God has a special crew that He calls in to do this. They're described in Ezekiel 39:17-22, and they're the winged buzzards and vultures of the air. They're called in to have what the Bible calls "a banquet." The buzzards and the vultures have a field day eating these bodies. They're the cleanup crew. There, of course, is a certain amount of human burial detail necessary (Ezekiel 39:11-16). It takes the Jews seven months to clean up Palestine of all the bodies. One of the first decrees the King makes is that anybody who sees a body is to put a stick in the ground and put a mark around it indicating that it's a body. Then the cleanup crews come back, and they take care of it.

After this final defeat of the enemies of God, all of the Jewish and gentile believers from Adam are raised. Christians have already been raised. Now gentiles and Jews are raised. They enter the millennium. That almost completes the first resurrection. Believers who die during the millennium are also raised at the end of the millennium, and they become part of the first resurrection. Then at the end of that millennium, the unbelievers are raised in the second resurrection. All of the Jews' unconditional covenants are then fulfilled by David's son, Jesus Christ, sitting upon the throne.

Now that's our entrance into the millennium. That sets the scene. It is a fateful, awesome, scary experience that the whole earth is going to go through as Jesus Christ finally comes that one dark night and bursts from heaven in glory and brings to an end what He has been patiently waiting for mankind to be willing to receive, and which most of mankind has rejected. Next time, we'll move into the millennium itself, and see how God has rearranged His household for this period--man's finest hour on the face of the earth.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1970

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