***The Characteristics of the Millennial Kingdom

RV159-02***

We are studying "War in Heaven" in Revelation 12:7-12. This is segment number seven.

**Salvation**

The apostle John, we have noted, sees Satan permanently excluded at mid-tribulation from any further entrance into God's throne room in heaven. Today, he has access to that throne room. When this happens, John hears a loud voice from heaven expressing the joys of the saints in heaven that Satan's expulsion from heaven has taken place, because it signals the imminent completion of certain great works of God. This includes the salvation of the believer in its ultimate phase: sinless perfection, in a glorified body. This includes turning loose, in a maximum way, the full power of God now in dealing with Satan and with his evil followers.

**The Messianic Kingdom**

This includes the establishing of the long-awaited, centuries-old promised Messianic Kingdom of God. This kingdom is to be located on the earth, and is to be exercised over all nations. It is to be ruled over by Jesus Christ Himself, who will exercise absolute sovereign authority. This kingdom is to last 1,000 years. It is to be a world government with Jerusalem as the capital city. It is to begin with saved inhabitants only, who then will have children as life goes on in its normal fashion. It is to be, in fact, the world of tomorrow which will enjoy permanent peace and maximum prosperity. It is to be led by the Jewish people who will then be restored to God's favor, and to their covenant rights.

You can see that this is not the world in which we live today. These are not the conditions that exist today. In many respects, the very opposite is taking place. The people in heaven know that for a long time, the Jewish people have been under the heel of oppressors. They know that for a long time, Satan has organized his world, and to this very hour, is using world leaders to try to organize the world so that there will be peace, and so that there will be a new order that will maintain prosperity and will maintain peace. All of this is vain and hopeless. People will not be able to pull this off.

**Satan is Cast out of Heaven**

However, when Satan is cast out in the mid-tribulation, it will be the sign that, in just three-and-a-half years, the kingdom that God has long described in Scripture will indeed come about, and will be established on this earth.

**The Characteristics of the Millennial Kingdom**

When that happens, this kingdom will have certain characteristics.

1. **A One-World Government**

First of all, the Word of God indicates that the Lord Jesus Christ will establish a world government, and He will be the sole ruler. In Zechariah 14:9, we read, "And the Lord will be King over all the earth. In that day, the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one." It is rather ludicrous to listen to amillennialists and to postmillennialists, who reject the concept of Jesus Christ reigning over an earthly kingdom, to say that all of these things have taken place. If there is anything true today, it is that Jesus Christ is not the king of this earth, and that His name is not the only name which is a power to contend with. Quite the opposite is true. Yet Zechariah, very clearly looking down to the time after the tribulation, says, "Yes, the earth is going to come under one a one world government under the rule of one man, the God-man, Jesus Christ, and His name will be the only name that any one will have to contend with.

At the opposite end of the Bible, in Revelation 19:16, we have this same principle enunciated: "And on His robe (the robe of Jesus Christ) and on His thigh, He has the name written: "King of Kings and Lord of Lords," expressing the same idea. He will establish a world government. He will be the sole ruler.

1. **A Beneficent Dictator**

Secondly, Jesus Christ will exercise in that kingdom absolute authority over the whole world, and He will actually rule as a beneficent dictator. Revelation 19:15 puts it this way: "And from His mouth (the mouth of Jesus Christ) comes a sharp sword, so that with it He will smite the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron. And He treads the winepress of the fierce wrath of God the Almighty." This is the time when Jesus Christ will bring all nations under His control. He will rule them with a no-nonsense rule described as a rod of iron rule. He will exercise a dictatorial power, and those who rebel (who resist Him) will be trampled upon like a farmer tramps upon his grapes when he is squeezing out the juice in the vat. There is indeed a new world order on the horizon. But it is not the one that you're hearing about in the news today.

1. **True Righteousness and Justice**

Third, the reign of Jesus Christ will be characterized by true righteousness and justice. All the world seeks righteousness today. They seek fairness, but it will never come about until Christ Himself is here reigning. Isaiah 11:3-5 say, "And He will delight in the fear of the Lord." This is describing the Messiah Savior: "And He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear." You can be deceived if your judgment is only on what and what you hear. We are going to have a ruler who cannot be deceived in this way: "But with righteousness, He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth."

Those who are genuinely poor, and who are genuinely in need, will be helped. Those who are con artists will be exposed. Those who are afflicted upon the earth, and who need justice, will receive it. Those who are not really afflicted, but are themselves operators of evil – they will be exposed: "And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth (that is, His Word), and with the breath of His lips, He will slay the wicked. Also, righteousness will be the belt about his loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist." The reign of Jesus Christ will be true righteousness and perfect justice.

1. **Jerusalem will be the World Capital**

The Bible tells us that Jerusalem will be the capital of this new world government. Isaiah 24:23: "Then the moon will be abashed, and the sun ashamed. For the Lord of hosts will reign on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, and His glory will be before His elders." This is referring again to the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

1. **Bible Doctrine**

Another characteristic of the Kingdom to come is that the whole world will be taught the divine viewpoint of Bible doctrine. This will be a period so dramatically different from today when the Bible is respected; honored; and, read, and public instruction will be given from the Word of God. This will in fact be a government activity. Isaiah 11:9: "They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." You will finally be able to talk to people about spiritual things, and have a point of contact (a frame of reference). They'll know what you're talking about because everybody will be constantly informed on doctrinal principles.

Isaiah 2:3 also says, "And many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord (that is, to Zion at Jerusalem), to the house of the God of Jacob, that He may teach us concerning His ways, and that we may walk in His paths, for the law will go forth from Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." When in the history of the human race has mankind, as a whole, wanted to go to Jerusalem to learn about God. Either Isaiah was a true prophet, predicting what was really going to happen, or else he was a false prophet, making up his own stuff, and we cannot believe him. You cannot read Scriptures like this and pretend that this has already been fulfilled. It takes an enormous amount of personal, intellectual dishonesty to do that.

In Zechariah 8:23, this principle is also added: "Thus says the Lord of hosts (the Lord of armies): 'In those days, ten men from all the nations (the gentile world) will grasp the garment of a Jew saying, 'Let us go with you. For we have heard that God is with you.''" How many people in the Arab world do you think are grabbing hold of Jews today and saying, "Tell me about God? I understand that you know about God. You have the information, the Scripture. Please teach me true truth about God. Not many are doing that. When have they ever done that? Never. You have a Scripture here that has never come to pass, and you cannot play loose with it.

1. **No More Wars**

The next characteristic of the world that Jesus Christ will rule over is that it will enjoy universal peace. There will be no wars, and there will be no military establishments teaching the art of warfare. All the war colleges will be closed. All the training facilities will be shut down. All the weapons will be disposed of. Isaiah 2:4: "And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples, and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war."

I had a professor at Baylor University right after World War II who pointed out this principle to me. His argument, as an amillennialist, was that the time would come when peace would now reign upon this earth. He felt that the horrendous World War II had to be the end of the line. Nobody could conceive of anything worse. Nobody could conceive of humanity ever subjecting itself to the suffering; the death by the millions; the human destruction; and, the material destruction. He said, "Now were going to start getting rid of those weapons, and we're turning to peace." And his argument was, "We will have an era when all the world will now be open to the gospel." I didn't think he was right then, and I know now that he was not right.

You can keep talking about hammering your swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, but that's not going to happen today. And if you do it, Saddam Hussein is going to stomp on you. It is interesting that in our nation today, it wasn't so very long ago when the Pentagon was being jumped on with both feet by the so-called experts – the people who were sure we didn't need much of a military establishment. They argued: "The world is not a threatening place. We even have a peace dividend. We can use all that money that we were going to use for preparing for war, for activities of peace." One of the worst things that they attempted to do was to make fun of the strategic defense initiative of President Reagan – that it would be possible to create a system of intercepting missiles in space, in flight, and destroy them before they ever hit. How many articles have we read of absolute assurance of scientists and physicists who said, "That is just literally impossible." And yet, wise men of the government said, "Let's find out," and they pressed on.

The Patriot missile is a crude example of SDI ballistics. It is a crude example, as best they could do it, but look how marvelously it is working. If it were not for that Patriot missile brought in by the Reagan administration over against the howling experts, can you imagine what the condition would be for Israel this day? By now, I suspect that Israel would have been in the battle. And by now, I suspect Saddam would have delivered his chemical and biological weapons. And by now, I suspect Israel would have detonated them with a nuclear bomb. It may yet come to that. But this is the principle that we now have: "We don't need the military establishment anymore. We now have come to a sophisticated point in time when we don't need these kinds of weapons.

How many people we're ridiculing the so-called smart weapons? Can you imagine what it is to know that you have an enemy who has you in his sights? He has a little laser beam, and every place that laser beam goes, especially at night, you pull the trigger, and that bullet is going to go right where that laser beam touched. We have such precision. Can you imagine what it is to be in an aircraft and know that you have someone who has you locked in by a computer that you cannot shake? Once he has locked you in, that's right. You cannot shake it. And the missile he fires is tied to that computer. Whatever that computer keeps telling him to do, wherever you go, you're going to get that missile.

Smart weapons are saving our hides today, but the time will come when we're not going to need any of that. It is foolhardy to think that we can have peace without the Prince of Peace. But the time will come when there will be no more wars and no more weapons.

1. **Morality**

This world of the kingdom of Christ on this earth is going to be characterized by a standard of public and private morality, which will be based upon the Word of God. The Bible will determine what is right and wrong. Shirley MacLaine and all the New Agers who now tell you that, because you are inherently deity to yourself, you must decide for yourself what is right for yourself and what is wrong for yourself. If it feels right, it is right for you. It may be wrong for somebody else. That time is going to go forever. In Isaiah 5:20, Isaiah pointed out this madness when he said, "Woe to those who call evil good; and, good evil." Isaiah says, "There is something that is evil, and there is something in this world that is good, and the person who determines it is God. It is His character that determines what is evil and what is good. For you to say that you, as a sinful human being, have within you the category of good and evil is madness in the extreme: "Woe to those who call evil good; and, good evil; who substituted darkness for light, and light for darkness; and, who substitute bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter."

This is exactly what the New Agers do. The New Agers say that Jesus Christ is the ruler of the kingdom of darkness, and Lucifer (as I point out by his very name – the angel of the morning and of Light) is the ruler of the kingdom of light. This is exactly what Isaiah is talking about. This is total reversal, so that Christ is the enemy, and Lucifer is the friend.

Isaiah 32:5-6 give us the basis of morality: No longer will the fool be called noble, or the road be spoken of as generous. For a fool speaks nonsense, and his heart inclines toward wickedness, to practice ungodliness, and to speak error against the Lord." Do you know any fools today who are being called noble? Just watch your entertainment world interviews on talk shows, and you will listen to fools who are being presented as noble personalities when they are trivial people. Do you know any rogue who has been spoken of as generous? Al Capone was a rogue, but he was very generous to people with his money; to people in need; and, to people who needed some help. You could always count on good old Al. There was always money flowing.

One time, one of his hit men got in touch with Billy McCarrell, who was pastor of the Cicero Bible church. Cicero, as you know, was Al Capone's headquarters just outside of Chicago. This man became thoroughly transformed. The grace of God did his work, and he had to detach himself from Capone's operation. Capone didn't like that, but he was impressed. The guy was totally changed, and he became a man of good qualities. Capone said, "You must be doing something really good down at Cicero Bible church." So, he sent a big donation down to this church. I mean, it was big money. They brought it to the pastor from good-hearted Al. This rogue was so generous. Billy McCarrell said, "You're right. The gospel is the power of God that changes the heart, and it has changed your man's heart. Take this money back to Capone and tell him that we know how he secured this money – through unrighteousness, and that God does not need his money to do His work. And he sent the money back.

I just hope that Noel comes and gives us a big sum of money from someone who is a rogue. It's going to be hard to give it back. I'm sure that we could find something good about him. I'm sure that McCarrell had a lot of people who said, "Well, his heart's in the right place. Why don't we pray for him? Maybe this will encourage. Take his money. It'll encourage him to become a Christian." I like that idea myself.

No, Isaiah says, "Calling good evil, and calling something that is evil good is going to get you nowhere. At the end of the Old Testament, in Malachi 3:18, this same principle is enunciated once more: "So, you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked; and, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve him." That's biblical morality. You're going to distinguish between the two, and it is going to be a whole different attitude toward what God says is right or wrong.

1. **Free Enterprise Capitalism**

The economic system of the kingdom will be free enterprise capitalism, and the result will be that there will be no poverty, as people are able to enjoy the fruits of their own labors. Isaiah 65:21-22 tell us about that: "And they shall build houses and inhabit them. They shall also plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit. They shall not plant and another eat. For as the lifetime of the tree, so shall be the days of My people, and My chosen ones shall wear out the work of their hands."

What you earn, you will use. You will not lose it to a government agency who's going to distribute it to the non-earners. You will have a long life to enjoy this. What you prepare and what you make, your own hands will wear out. It will not be that of someone else.

1. **Marriage and Family**

Another characteristic of this kingdom is that marriage and the family will be the foundation of society, and the chain of command within the home will be respected. Women will be treated with the respect and the care within the family unit, and within the role that they are to play as the nurturers and the mothers and the wives. They will no longer be degraded. They will no longer be faced with the madness of: where, but in the United States, with its spiritual degeneration, can you have a father and mother who have been called to military service, are now in Saudi Arabia. And on television, we see their little primary-aged children saying, "I just wish my parents could come home." Only in this benighted country would you send parents off to war.

Even in the Old Testament, one of the principles of the doctrine of warfare was explicitly clear – that you did not send women off for combat activities, or place them in harm's way. In the Old Testament, if a man recently was married, and military activity developed, he was not to be sent off to the war until he had a period of time at home to enjoy the marriage that he had entered into. Even for the male, there was that consideration, let alone to send women. How many mothers has this government of ours sent to Saudi Arabia? Mothers! They do this instead of at least having the wisdom to say, "Yes, we need the nurses there. We need the clerics. We need the personnel in certain areas, but those have to be single women who are free to do that. That's because marriage and the family are not honored and respected as the building cornerstone of society today. In the millennium, the whole system is going to be corrected.

I think you can see as we're going along with these characteristics, how far Satan has deviated in the world that he has created from the way that God intended this world to function, and how much is going to have to be taken apart and redesigned.

1. **Healing, and an Increased Lifespan**

Another factor that will characterize the kingdom of Christ here on this earth is that sickness and physical deformities will be healed, resulting in an increased lifespan for the individual. Isaiah 35:5-6 point that out to us when Isaiah says, "Than the eyes of the blind will be open. The ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the drum will shout for joy. For waters will break forth in the wilderness, and the streams in the desert."

Isaiah 65:20 also says, "No longer will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days." Infant mortality is eliminated in this kingdom: "Or an old man who does not live out his days." Old people will get the full allotment, which at this time is going to be a matter of several hundreds of years: For the youth will die at the age of 100." To die at the age of 100 will be viewed as someone who is viewed now as a child who dies today: "100 years will be but the age of a child. And the one who does not reach the age of 100 shall be thought accursed. It will be unthinkable for anybody not to live to be 100 years old. Nobody dies at 100 years of age in this kingdom. But when you do so, it will be because you have done something that has placed upon you the sin of the death.

So, we have a strong indication here that health will be universal, and restoration of physical capacities will be universal. When death comes into the picture, it will be because of God's allotted time span to you, which will be greatly enlarged; or, it will be (especially if it's an early age) because God is executing you for some sin. It is the sin unto death. It'll be a no-nonsense kingdom.

1. **No Natural Disasters or Animal Ferocity**

Another thing that will characterize it is that disasters in nature will be removed along with animal ferocity. Isaiah 11:6-9: "The wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together, and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze. Their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, and the nursing child will play by the whole of the cobra, and the weened child will put his hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea."

You probably have made the connection and thought: "This has never really existed on the face of the earth." Yet, the amillennialists say that all of the promises of God that were given to the Jewish people, such as here in the book of Isaiah, were fulfilled by the year 70 A.D. When has this ever happened? In heaven? Do you have lions in heaven? Do you have snakes in heaven? Do you see how the madness goes? They say, "Well, no, we don't have lions in heaven – maybe my favorite dog, but not lions, and no snakes." You're not going to have that in heaven. So, what are they going to do with this? Symbolize it: "This is just symbolical talk of happiness: Happy, happy, happy, happy time (from South Pacific. You don't have a dream. How are you going to have a dream?" This is all happy-time up in heaven. This doesn't really mean that this is a happy time on earth. Wouldn't it be nice to go to the zoo, and walk around all those lions; pet them on the head' pull their tails; and, have them turn around and lick you with their big tongues? Their tongues are rough, too, just like your little cat's tongue is. It'll would be great fun. This will be peace and quiet. Yet, the amillennialist says, "God doesn't really mean this – here on earth. It just kind of a happy time up there." A happy time in heaven?

1. **Spirituality**

Well, another thing is that it'll be an era of great spirituality – an era where people stay in temporal fellowship. It's going to be expressed in ecstatics. In Joel 2:28-29, there will be a great emotional impact behind the expression of spirituality in those days. This is not possible today because Satan is here, and he distorts the emotions through the sin nature, as demonstrated in the charismatic movement. When God the Holy Spirit came on the day of Pentecost, and people were struck with that immense impact of the power of God, they were overwhelmed with an enormous sense of joy. They were emotionally elated, and they were beside themselves when they found they could speak foreign languages, and they could proclaim the Word of God to all those foreigners who had gathered in Jerusalem. It was an enormously ecstatic moment.

But Peter wasn't saying that that moment was the fulfillment of this passage in Joel which he quoted at the time. He said. "What is taking place today is just like what's going to happen in the millennium when God the Holy Spirit will be free to let your emotions run free with your joy and your praise to God.

We have many distant Bereans who send those envelopes in weekly such that we get with their financial support. One of them sent a check this week, and on it, he had written at the bottom, "Glory to God." The guy was ecstatic. The guy was emotionally on a high as he sent this very large gift to God's work. What's moving him? My personality? My inner resources? ... No, it is God the Spirit that has moved our brother to say, "Glory to God" when he empties his bank account in a substantial way.

Here in Joel 2:28-29, this great era of spirituality will be in this way: "It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind." Wow! Can you imagine what it is to live in a world where everyone is filled with the Holy Spirit? Everybody is walking in step with God, and if someone isn't, an angel taps him on the shoulder, and he brings him before one of you, and the angel reports in, and you, as an administrator in some area, make a disposition of this person's evil activity: "I'll pour out my spirit on all mankind, and your sons and your daughters will prophesy." That doesn't mean that they will necessarily predict future things, but they will (in the basic meaning of "prophesy" – to proclaim the mind of God). They will be proclaiming the Word of God: "Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions." And here again, a dream will mean something. Here again, you will have visions that God will give that will be enormously moving emotionally. Ecstatics will run high: "And even on the male and female servants." The lowest levels of society will be included: "I will pour out My Spirit in those days."

Now, "those days" is the question. The charismatic says that "those days" are "these days" that we're living in. But if you will follow through the context there in verses 30-32, you will see that he is speaking about the tribulation. The events there have never happened. They will not happen until the tribulation. Joel is making it very clear after these things take place, the tribulation is terminated, and then this will come about. The establishment of the Messianic Kingdom of Jesus Christ on this earth will then be the culmination of the promises of centuries of waiting.

The world that Satan has created needs to be taken apart and reconstructed by the Lord Jesus Christ in the right way. Human viewpoint needs to be exposed as the fraud and the bankrupt thing that it is. Divine viewpoint needs to be vindicated, and the evils and the ills of society can only be resolved by divine viewpoint. This is going to be a time when the majority opinion of a bunch of people with their old sin natures are not going to determine what is right and wrong. False religion will be non-existent in the Kingdom of Christ on this earth, for the simple fact that Satan, the originator of false religion, is going to be out of operation – imprisoned at this time in the pit of the abyss.

**The Authority of Christ**

Then John adds one more thing that is going to come to a culmination that brings these events that are the basis of the praise of these people in heaven. The final event is: "The authority of His Christ." The Greek word looks like this "exousia." The word "exousia" means the right to exercise some kind of power. Here, it specifically refers to the right of Jesus Christ to exercise certain powers in a climactic and dramatic way. This word, furthermore, signifies power that you have the right to claim, as well as the right to use. He identifies it specifically as the authority of His Christ, the Messiah Savior of Israel. The supreme authority of Jesus Christ is about to be exercised over all the world.

The authority of Jesus Christ is associated and identified in various ways. First of all, God, as the Creator, is the ultimate authority over mankind. And God expresses His supreme authority through the revelation in Scripture. So, God's authority is found in the inerrant Bible. God exercises His authority by what He says in the Bible. And God has the right to exercise His sovereign authority over mankind, and to demand the obedience and the subjection of man to that authority.

Romans 9:19-24 put it this way. Here's a man who is objecting to the authority of God that decides so many things about human destiny, and he objects to it. Paul says to him, "You will say to me then, 'Why does He find fault? (Why does God find fault?) For who resists His will?" On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this?' Will it? Or does not the potter have the right over the clay to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of earth prepared for destruction?"

Remember that I told you that God lets evil run its course. God tolerates vessels that are that He Himself has made that are destined for destruction. Why? Because He wants to have a frame of reference of comparison: "And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which he prepared beforehand for glory (for heaven), even us whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among gentiles." Who were you to complain about the sovereign will of God as His authority is exercised in your life? You've lost your perspective. He did make you. You are a piece of clay that He has molded. He can make you a person of great nobility and honor; or, He can make you a person of very common, ordinary lack of honor. But you have no right to complain to God. The sin nature rebels against that, but it is a principle of the Word of God that authority belongs, first of all, to the God who made us.

Now, the Lord Jesus Christ, as the God-man, carries this authority of God. Therefore, the Lord Christ has authority in several areas, and the people in heaven are glad that this authority is finally going to be exercised. Our Lord has authority, for example, to interpret the Scriptures, and to demand that we act accordingly.

In Luke 20:1-2, we read, "And it came about on one of the days while He (Jesus) was teaching the people in the temple and preaching the gospel, that the chief priests and the scribes, with the elders, confronted Him. And they spoke, saying to Him, "Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You the authority?" In the context, what they're talking about is that He walked into the temple, and He saw the traders in an area where they were not supposed to be, carrying on business, changing money and selling. And the Lord Jesus became so indignant and angry that He drove them all out. They had permission to be there by the religious authorities. The religious authorities came up to Him, said, "By what authority (by what right) do you do this to these tradesmen?"

Of course, the answer that the Lord Jesus gave was that He had authority to interpret the Word of God. And the Word of God said, "You will not make My Father's house a place of business." They had some other interpretation for it. And the Lord, "You're wrong." He had the right to interpret, and to act accordingly.

Furthermore, when the Lord Jesus Christ taught the Word of God, consequently, He taught it with compelling authority. You could not sit and listen to the Lord Jesus Christ explain the Bible, and pass Him off with a wave of your hand. You couldn't just say, "Well, that's His opinion." He so locked you into the Scripture itself that you had to say, "God is mistaken." You knew that what He said was the opinion of God, and not of Himself. He repeatedly said, "I don't tell you anything except what My Father has taught Me in my humanity to pass on to you."

In Matthew 7:28-29, Jesus gets through with the passage here in what we call the Sermon on the Mount. The impact is enormous. Things that He is saying, line-after-line, are absolutely things that people have never heard. Yet, their hearts are ringing with the truth that the connections are true that He is making. He is really interpreting the Word of God in truth. But it's not what their scribes have taught them. It's not what their priests have taught them. I've noticed this also in our Jewish rabbis, as well as our priests and preachers. When I've listened to them, they're very indistinct. They're very non-dogmatic. I've asked several questions of rabbis that are simply theological questions, just out of the Bible. And almost inevitably, they say, "Well, some people believe this. Others hold this view." And when I walk out, I don't know what to believe. If I were a person trying to find an answer, I have alternatives to choose from, because the Bible is treated as a book that does not really speak for God.

Now, the Lord Jesus gets through, and this Sermon on the Mount has had one bombshell statement after another. The result was that: "When Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teachings, for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes." When He spoke, you didn't pass Him off as some ninny. You knew that He spoke with the authority of God Himself.

The authority of the Lord Jesus Christ extends because He bears the authority of deity to the forgiving of sins. In Matthew 9:6, when He healed told the paralytic man that his sins had been forgiven him, and the religious leaders, without saying it out loud, but in their minds, they said, "Who does He think He is to forgive sins?" And Jesus, being a mind reader, startled them by asking them, "Why do you question that sort of thing?" And He said, "Let Me ask you something. Which do you think is easier? Is it easier to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' to this poor man who can't get up and walk because he's paralyzed? Or is it easier to tell them to get up and walk? What would be the proof?" Well, it's a whole lot easier to tell somebody, "Your sins are forgiven." When people come to a confessional, it's very easy for a priest to absolve them and tell them that they have had their sins forgiven. But it's very hard, when they come in and they can't walk (they're paralyzed), for the priest to give them their feet back so that they can walk out of the confessional. That's much harder.

So, Jesus says, "You don't think I can forgive sins? Let me do the harder part that only God can do. I'll give this man his feet back, and I can only do that because I have the authority of deity. If I have the authority of deity to make this man walk, I have the authority to forgive him his sins." So, in Matthew 9:6, we read, "Jesus said, 'But in order that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.' Then He said to the paralytic, 'Rise; take up your bed; and, go home.' And he rose and went home."

Verse 8: "But when the multitudes saw this, they were filled with awe. They glorified God who had given such authority to men." They knew where His authority came from. He was exercising divine authority.

The Lord Jesus Christ gives a lost sinner the right to believe the gospel and to be saved. If He doesn't give you the authority to believe the gospel, you can't do it. John 1:12 is a verse that many of you know very well indeed: "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right (and there's the word – the 'authority') to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name." How do you receive Him? And please notice that the end of the verse tells you how: you believe in His name."

I've heard evangelists who love to talk about receiving Christ, by which they mean raising a hand, or coming down an aisle. And I can name one that you would all know who regularly does this, but he never goes to the end of the verse. He only quotes the first part "to receive Him," so that he can get the public move. But the way you receive Him is on the basis of the authority that Christ has given to you to believe in His name. If He doesn't give you that authority, you will not be saved.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the final spiritual authority in the world, because He alone knows God the Father, and He alone can reveal the thinking of God to man. In Matthew 11:27, we have this authority of Christ as our conduit to the mind of God. Jesus says, "All things have been handed over to Me by My Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, nor does anyone know the Father except the Son, and any one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."

So, people who like to talk about God, and what God thinks, and how God would do things, unless they are born-again believers who have Christ living in them, they have no way to speak for God at all, because only as Jesus Christ teaches you about God the Father, will you be able to speak concerning the mind of God.

The authority of Christ is fundamentally based on these factors, and the right that has been given to him as deity. This expresses itself further in a number of ways in His relationship to the creatures of God, both angelic and human, on the face of the earth. Next time we shall pursue further the authority of Christ in that respect.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1990

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