



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Revelation 20:4-6, Isaiah 11:1-10

“The Kingdom of God upon the Earth”

TRANSCRIPT

[prayer removed from audio]

[Message] Now tonight, we are to consider as our topic, “The Kingdom of God upon the Earth”, but since we did not complete our last time, when we get to the lesson itself, I want to say just a word or two about the preceding topic, “The Covenants of God and the Second Advent. When you read the Bible you discover that from the Book of Genesis chapter 3, verse 15 to the Book of Matthew in the New Testament, we have books that are pervaded by the question, “Where is he that has been promised in the Scriptures?” In Genesis 3:15 in the passage we considered a long time ago, which we call the protoevangelium, the Redeemer was promised and all of the Old Testament prepares for his coming. And so finally, he does come, at the end of the days, the Bible says, and is given us by means of his first advent, a revelation of God in his ministry. And then it’s rather startling, that from this moment of his earthly ministry, Jesus goes back to the right hand of the Father. And the rest of history is gathered around the question, “When is he coming again?” so that these two advents of the Lord Jesus are really the story of the Bible. The first advent when he came to die for the sins of men, the second advent when he comes to establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth.

Now of course, the Jews as many were greatly perplexed by the Scriptures on this point, because as they read the Old Testament they discovered that there was a two-fold picture of the coming of Jesus Christ. There was a picture of one who was coming and suffering, in lowliness and humiliation, and they saw many passages like this. The one outstanding passage, which I'll just mention, among many, is Isaiah chapter 53. It's obvious that the servant of Jehovah, who is presented there, is one who comes in lowliness and humiliation and suffering. As a matter of fact, the chapter states that he dies. But then in that same Book of Isaiah in chapter 11, and later on in the latter chapters of the book, one of the great truth, that comes out is the exaltation of this coming one. So that in the Old Testament we have the story of one who is to be a king, and yet he is to be a sufferer. One who is to be mighty, and yet he is also lowly. One who is to be acclaimed by men, but rejected by men. One who would be the eternal one, but yet at the same time the eternal one is to die.

Now finally, many of the Jews came to the solution, which is still held in some quarters, and that is, that there is not one messiah but there are two messiahs. And they spoke about Messiah Ben Joseph, or Messiah the son of Joseph, and Messiah Ben David, Messiah the son of David. And in order to harmonize these apparently difficult passages, they said that Messiah Ben Joseph would be the messiah who would suffer. Messiah Ben David, Messiah the son of David, would be the exalted king. And they even worked out a way whereby the two united in the fulfilling of the program of God. It was Messiah Ben Joseph who was to die in the battle of Armageddon, but it was Messiah Ben David who was responsible for his resurrection, or his return to life. Now that of course, was the wrong way to solve the problem. The right way was to realize that the same messiah had two advents and not just one. In the first advent he would fulfill all of the prophecies that have to do with suffering and lowliness and humiliation, but at the second advent he would fulfill the prophecies that had to do with glory and exaltation.

Now it would have been very difficult for one to have a clear view of this, apart from the ministry of Jesus Christ, some did and it was surely possible. But the apostles themselves were very confused about this. As a matter of fact, they did not understand it. They did not understand the resurrection until after it took place. John tells us in the 20th chapter, remember, that it was then, after the death of Christ, that he came to believe in the doctrine which Jesus had preached often to him, the doctrine of the resurrection. So that the New Testament revolves around the two comings and the explanation of the apparent problem is that Jesus Christ is to come twice. Now with this enlightenment, and with the teaching of our Lord Jesus, which he gave them after his resurrection in the fifty day period of time, the apostles were then able to understand the Old Testament. Now we look back and we can understand it very simply, because we have the key to the understanding, which they did not have at that time.

Today we find it rather striking too, that the world is not very much interested in the coming of Jesus Christ. They'd rather think that the idea of the second coming of Jesus Christ is the believer fanatics. I've sometimes wondered why this is. It would seem to me that this would be a glorious event for the world, which longs for peace, and happiness, and joy. Well what more wonderful thing than to have the assurance that God's son is coming, and is really going to bring us a great society, which men talk about? But you see, implicit in the second advent of Jesus Christ is something that is implicit in the first advent. Implicit in the first advent of course, is the teaching that we cannot expiate our own sins. Otherwise, why should he come? Why a cross? In fact that's the strangest thing for man to understand. Why a cross of the Son of God? If God is a loving God and this is the only good man who ever lived, how can we explain the cross? God must not be a God of love. Or if he's a God of love he's not a God of power because he couldn't prevent this from happening to his own son.

Now of course, the answer is very simple, if we read the Bible, and it is simply this, that Jesus Christ had to die in order that he might redeem us, in order that he might

be our substitute, that he might be our savior. Well that's why he came. But if we accept that, we also accept as a corollary of it that we cannot save ourselves, that we need him. And that's a blow to human pride. That's why we hear men talk about the great society, and the new frontier, and the new deal, and the raw deal, and the rest of them, but yet at the same time they are not very happy over the fact that someone is going to do this for them. It would seem they would love this, look forward to it, rejoice with Christians over it. But they want to do it themselves. They cannot believe that they cannot do it themselves.

Now when we come to the second advent, the second advent of course, does not tell us that we cannot expiate our sins, but it does tell us that we cannot restore order to this cosmos, or this world in which we live. If the first advent says we cannot expiate our sins, the second advent says we cannot get ourselves out of the mess in which we are in, that we need divine enablement for redemption and we need divine enablement for the establishment of a righteous rule upon the earth. And so because men are full of pride, they don't like the first coming, which says, “Ye must be born again,” and they don't like the second coming, which says that, “Only God can establish the Kingdom of God upon the earth.”

I have been amused ever since I became a Christian over the fact that preachers often talk about bringing in the Kingdom of God upon the earth. Well they don't talk about it quite as much after the Second World War as they used to after the First World War. But it always seemed rather strange to me that we should call the Kingdom of God upon the earth something that man was supposed to bring in. And all you have to do is to just think over, or reflect upon the name of the kingdom to realize who is prominent in it. It is the Kingdom of God. In other words, he is the one who establishes it, and he is the one who rules and reigns, not man.

Now this is a lengthy introduction, but I think it is important for us, so that we understand why it is that men did not understand about the first advent and do not

understand about the second advent. Now remember we said, when we came to the church, that the church began on the day of Pentecost with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, that all believers were baptized into one body when the Spirit came, and that one body is the church, composed of all who believe in Jesus Christ. That is the true church, the believing church, the church that really matters, so far as God is concerned, the church on whose rolls we must be if we are to enter heaven. Now the church was formed by the baptism of the Holy Spirit. And when he came, all who believed in Jesus Christ were baptized into one body. Now the church began on the day of Pentecost and has been in existence, well perhaps I really should have put, say, nineteen hundred and thirty-eight years plus, just using thirty as a round figure for the time when the Holy Spirit came. But here we are in the church age, and we are at nineteen hundred and sixty-eight and we do not know when the church age shall conclude. The Bible tells us the church age shall conclude with the rapture of the church, or the catching up of the church to meet the Lord in the air.

Now what I want you to do if you will, is to turn with me to Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10, and let's read this verse. Now in 1 Thessalonians chapter 4, we have the description of what happens, but in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10 we have the text that says it will happen. Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10, now remember, these are, in Revelation chapters 2 and 3, our Lord's letters to the churches. Not only did Paul write letters to the churches, Jesus also wrote letters to the churches. His letters are all gathered together in two chapters, chapters 2 and 3 of the Book of Revelation. There are seven of these letters. One of them is a letter to the church at Philadelphia.

Now lest you think that these passages apply only to the church at Philadelphia, some have suggested this, I remind you that at the end of each one of the letters to the churches there is this statement, notice verse 13 of Revelation chapter 3, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.” after each one of the letters. Now these letters are just like the letter to the Romans or the letter to the Corinthians.

They're letters addressed to individual churches that were in existence in John's day, but at the same time, since they were churches that existed in this church age here, that truths that were applicable to them were applicable to all the churches. Just as we today read Romans and apply it to ourselves, though we're not Romans in Rome, we're not Corinthians in Corinth, but we apply those verses to ourselves because we form part of the church living in the same age that they lived in.

Now in Revelation chapter 3 and verse 10 we read these words, “Because thou hast kept the word of my patience, I will also keep thee from the hour of temptation, (or the hour of trial) which shall come upon all the world, to try them that dwell upon the earth.” Now the hour of trial is the great tribulation period. It's the hour of testing, which is a future time. Now he says, “I also will keep thee from the hour of testing.” Now he does not say, “I will keep you through that hour of testing.” He does not say, “I will take you out from the midst of it” as if they were to enter into it and then be taken out from it, but “I will keep you from that hour”, not from the testing, but “I will keep you from the hour of testing, I will keep you from the time.”

Now 1 Thessalonians chapter 4 describes what happens, so let's turn back again to 1 Thessalonians 4, and just read through the passage. All of these are great passages and it's unfortunate we only have a short time of course, how many times have I said this on the tape? I wonder if somebody would just count it up sometime and discover how often it is. But let's read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, in which we have the description of what will happen at the rapture of the church.

Now, 1 Thessalonians 4:13, the Thessalonians had been disturbed because since Paul had left them a few weeks previously, apparently some had died. And he had told the believers about their glorious hope of meeting the Lord in the air. So they had apparently written, wondering if those who died before the time that Jesus came again in the air, “Would they miss the rapture of the church by having died before that time?” So he answers the question, “But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,”

I have a good friend, he likes to say, “There are Mennonite brethren who are fine believers, and I would not mind being one of them. There are Grace brethren who are fine believers and I would not mind being one of them. There is the Church of the Brethren and it has some believers in it and I wouldn’t mind being one of them. But one of the brethren that I really don’t want to be is one of whom Paul speaks here, the ignorant brethren. So “But I would not have you to be ignorant brethren,” [Laughter] there is however, a comma after ignorant so we can’t read it that way. “I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren,” unfortunately at one time or another, all of us are ignorant about the Scriptures aren’t we? We all form one church of ignorant brethren, [Laughter] “Concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. (I have a friend who reads that, ‘that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.’) [Laughter] For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent (or remember, precede is really the meaning of the Greek word, prevent, is an old English word that meant precede at that time, shall not precede) them which are asleep.”

In other words, we’re not going to have the advantage over those who have died, as you might think, you Thessalonians. Just because they have died, they’re not going to miss the rapture. As a matter of fact, because they have died, they’re going to have a little bit of an advantage. And this is what he’s going to tell them about. Verse 16, “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:” in other words, those whose bodies have been placed in the grave, here, they shall rise first. That is, their bodies shall be resurrected, resurrection always has to do with the body, remember. They

shall rise first. Their spirits have come with the Lord. And so, as their bodies are resurrected, their bodies and their spirits rejoin one another. The dead in Christ shall rise first. “Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds,” and so we who are still alive at the time Jesus comes, we shall be caught up together with them and so the dead and the living meet one another, he goes on to say, “we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: so shall we ever be with the Lord.”

So apparently, the dead in Christ rise first, these arrows don't mean anything remember, they're not Scriptural. And those who are living also rise, and together the one body is united, and the one body meets the Lord in the air. Now that is called the rapture of the church because the word “caught up together” in verse 17 is a word that means “to be raptured”. As a matter of fact, in the Latin translation at this point, the Latin word, you'll remember it from your Latin, is rapio. Now rapio was a third conjugated verb, remember? And the principle part, the passive participle, was raptus. And from that we get the English word, rapture, which means “to be caught up.” If we say, “We listened to that music with enraptured ears” it means that we were caught up in the music and so transformed by the beauty of it, or the beauty of its sounds. So, the “to be caught up” is to be raptured, and from that Latin translation of the New Testament we obtain the term “the rapture of the church.” And this term is often used to distinguish this aspect of our Lord's coming from this aspect, the second advent. So the rapture of the church takes place then.

Now you'll remember that in Revelation chapter 3, verse 10 he said, “Because you've kept the word of my patience, I also will keep you from the hour of trial, which is going to come to pass upon the earth, to try all them that are upon the earth.” So after the rapture of the church, there comes the hour of trial.

Now we don't have time, because we have a lot to cover, we don't have time to discuss the tribulation, but that hour of trial is God's final way of bringing judgment upon

the nation of Israel, and upon the Gentiles, for having rejected Jesus Christ, and also it is the means of bringing to conversion, the Jewish believers who are responsible for the conversion of the nation as a whole, and of great multitudes of Gentiles, which no man can number, who are converted during this time of great tribulation. Now as I said last time or the time before, this is the time of the greatest soul winning that the world has ever seen. During the period of the great tribulation, the inspired writer says that there shall come out of the great tribulation, a multitude from every tribe, kindred, tongue, nation, which exists upon the earth. And it is so large that no man is able to number them. Now all Baptists will be frustrated by that I'm sure, because if there is no numbering of the saints, [Laughter] if you have any Baptist blood in you at all, this is bound to be very frustrating. But it's going to be a great time of salvation, as a result of the saving work of Jesus Christ during this time. It also is a great time of judgment too.

Now the Bible speaks also, in addition of the rapture of the church and this tribulation period, it then speaks in great detail of the second advent of the Lord Jesus. So now I want you to turn to Revelation chapter 19, and we're just going to read along a few verses for the rest of our time. And I'm going to make some comments as we go along, on the second advent and the Kingdom of our Lord. Now in the context of Revelation chapter 19 we reach the end of the judgments of the Book of the Revelation. Remember in Revelation, by the way, it's often thought by students of Scripture, who are just beginning, that the Book of Revelation is a difficult book to understand. It is not. It is one of the simplest books in the Bible to understand. Now I know that there are some details that are difficult, but as far as overall pattern and plan, it is extremely simple. And all you have to do is read it through a few times and you will see that it falls into a beautiful structure, and it's easy to understand, if you're willing to just take it at face value. Of course if you're not willing to take it at face value, then of course you'll have difficulties.

But after the opening chapter, and the chapter which we’ve just read, chapters which we just read from, 2 and 3 which have to do with the churches. Beginning in chapter 4 and going through chapter 18, we have the introduction and the description of a series of three great judgments or three series of great judgments, which come to pass upon the earth. There are the seven seal judgments, there are the seven trumpet judgments, and there are the seven bowl or vial judgments. Twenty-one judgments in all are set forth. In addition, in between some of the chapters, there is interspersed, descriptive chapters of the great characters who shall be on the earth during this time. Men like the beast, the false prophet, Satan’s activities, Israel, the Gentiles, and so on, the characters.

But when chapter 19 opens, we have a scene of a marriage, and then the description of the second advent. Now in a sense, this description, which begins with verse 11, is the culmination of all of biblical prophecy, for the great part of biblical prophecy has to do with the second advent and introduction of the kingdom, which immediately follows it, and let’s begin with verse 11. By the way, I would remind you this may startle some of you. We are often told to take the Bible literally. I believe that, that’s the general rule. But now we must not be, go over board. Fail to realize that the Bible also has figures of speech. As a matter of fact, the Bible has a great deal of symbolical language as well. It has figures of alliteration, onomatopoeia, etcetera, just many types of figure of speech. And so when we say the Bible is to be interpreted literally, we must qualify that, in order that we can incorporate figures of speech, and symbolic language, and apocalyptic language into our meaning, literally. I think it’s better, really, to say we interpret the Bible normally, not literally. That is, as we would any book, we look at the character of the literature and interpret it accordingly. If it’s apocalyptic, we interpret it as apocalyptic literature, expect to find a great deal of symbolism. If it’s historical material, we expect to find very little figure of speech and very little symbolism, and we read it as if we would read our newspapers, or similarly at

least, and so on. Poetical language, we expect to find a great deal of figure of speech. And that’s what we do find.

Now when we come to the Book of Revelation, John tells us right as he begins that this is a book of visions. And they are to be interpreted, frequently, symbolically. Occasionally, he will define his symbols, sometimes he doesn’t define them, they are defined by all of the Bible that precedes, for Revelation is built upon the sixty-five books that precede, particularly, the books of Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah, and so on. And, as a matter of fact, our Lord’s teaching in the Olivet discourse, comes in for a great deal of stress too. So when I read in verse 11, “And I saw heaven open and behold a white horse,” I do not think that this is a horse that can be entered in the Kentucky Derby, like Dancer’s Image, or Forward Pass. It’s no mighty Pegasus upon which Bellerophon tried to ride. Well this is symbolic language, and it is designed to represent the speed with which the second advent of Jesus Christ takes place. But now once we have said that this is a symbol, the horse upon which the rider rides, let’s not evaporate it into nothingness, and fail to realize that this event will really happen. It is to be an historical event. It’s described in symbolic language.

Now if I had been writing history, on January 2 of 1968, I would have written the headline like this, “Crimson Tide Swamps Aggies” [Laughter] that’s the way I would’ve written it. That’s the way I wanted it to come to pass, [Laughter] it didn’t come to pass. But whether it did or did not, I’m sure that if you read the heading in the sport page, January 2, 1968, you would’ve not gotten in your car and rushed to get away from the flood, because you would’ve realized that that was figurative language. The crimson tide represents Alabama, some of you look very puzzled, ladies, it’s the football team of the University of Alabama. [Laughter]

But you would’ve known that, so let’s be careful to remember that while we talk about symbolic language, we are not talking about an event that is symbolic. The reality stands behind the symbol. The reality historically stands behind the figure of speech too.

So someone is really coming, though it is described in this language. Now it's a, I think this is necessary for us, in order that we may read the Bible intelligently. Many people read the Bible for years before they learn something like that. Consequently, they're swimming in, not a crimson tide, but they're swimming in the Book of Revelation for months and years because they don't understand simple things like that. Sometimes teachers don't either, and confound the confusion. [Laughter] “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, (now he's faithful and true in opposition to the Antichrist who is the lie and teaches the lie) and in righteousness he doth judge and make war.” See this is a coming in judgment and later, in a moment he will say he's the word of God, that's Jesus' name, the word of God, and he will be called King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and that is our Lord's name. But you'll notice that in righteousness, he doth judge and make war. Now this is the same gentle Jesus who came the first coming, at the first coming, but he's coming in an entirely different disposition at his second coming. Now notice the description, “His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself.” In other words, there is something about him that is super human. The name represents the character of a person in Hebraic thought. We talk about the name of God, we mean God in all of his power and attributes.

“And he has a name written that no man knew but he himself. And he was clad (or clothed) with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. (that's the name whereby he is known to us, who have believed in him as the word of God) And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. (this is his second advent in

judgment upon the earth) And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, (three times a reference is made to the name, this time) King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.”

So here we have then, a picture of a royal commander who is followed by a dazzling retinue, and the description that is given of him is one who is characterized by penetrating judgment, and overthrow of the enemies of God. Now this implies that at the, just preceding the advent of Jesus Christ there is a great confederacy of evil upon the earth, which apparently is just about to take over the rule of the earth. And it is by means of the second advent of the Lord Jesus, with the armies of heaven, that he overthrows those who are gathered in rebellion against God upon the earth. Now let's read of what happens at the battle of Armageddon that follows, “And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;” isn't that an interesting name for God, you would think that that adjective was absolutely unnecessary, “the great God.”

Some time ago I read in a magazine about the pigeon English that some of the people in the South Sea Island speak. And one of my good friends was engaged in missionary work for many years among the South Sea Islanders and he used to be able to speak the pigeon English, and it's very amusing. But the name that they have for God I thought was real good. It's this, “Big fellow master too much who bosses heaven and ground.” [Laughter] Isn't that a good name? “Big fellow master too much who bosses heaven and ground” that's the name for God, “The great big fellow master too much who bosses heaven and ground” that's God. Well that's a way of saying it pretty completely. Now, he says, “Gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and

great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, (that is he was captured) and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. (and by the way, that shows that it is possible for men who are satanic in power to work miracles, the fact that you see a mighty miracle performed does not necessarily mean that it is of God, as you can see here) These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.”

Now I think this is the answer to a prayer that occurs throughout the Book of Revelation, “How long, oh God,” or “oh Lord, wilt Thou not avenge our blood upon those that dwell upon the earth?” This is the answer to that petition. It is also the answer to the petition in the Lord’s prayer, which we often pray in churches, “Thy kingdom come” this is the means whereby that kingdom is to come. Now verse 1 of chapter 20, “And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years,” Now remember that Satan is an angelic being and consequently a spirit being and so the chain that you find here mentioned is therefore not a chain about which you could put about your tire in snow weather, but it is a chain with which you bind a spirit, this is symbolic language. “And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must (not shall, “he must”) be loosed a little season.”

Now the binding of Satan, which precedes the kingdom, is one of the most reasonable things in the Bible and yet it’s caused a lot of problem. I think it’s a prerequisite for the kingdom, because you can hardly have a kingdom upon the earth

with Satan roaming around. And furthermore, it exhibits man's responsibility for his own sin because during the period of time of the Kingdom of God upon the earth, we're going to have Satan bound and still at the end of this period, as we read at the latter part of this chapter, there is a great rebellion against God. So that in spite of the fact that Jesus Christ is present, in spite of the fact that Satan is bound, there still lurks evil in the heart of man. Now God has been trying to show men, ever since the Garden of Eden and man's fall, that man is a sinner. This is one of the great purposes of divine revelation. The other purpose of course, is to show that Christ has died for that sin. But nobody is willing to respond to this until they know their need, and so one of the great things that God has been trying to show, down through the years, is that men are in independence of God. That's why the Law of Moses was given, remember, we pointed out. So that during the time of the kingdom, in the last of God's ages, when human nature has flowered, so to speak, with Satan bound, with Christ here in person, we are going to discover that man is still possessed of a sin nature. Now that's why we read, "And after that he must be loosed a little season" for God has one final lesson, to show men that their problem is not environment.

Do you remember when Watts took place a few years ago? Do you remember the explanations that came from Washington? The explanations among them, of course there were many explanations, none of them biblical, but one of the ones that came constantly was, "If people were just in the proper environment we would not have these problems." Well granted, we might not have the certain types of problems that we have now because environment does have something to do with the types of problems that exist, but you can be sure that the problems would still exist, they may manifest themselves in a different way.

The Bible states that man's problem is sin. And this is God's last and final attempt to prove to men that they need him. And so we read that Satan is bound for a thousand years. That he should deceive the nations no more, and after that he must be loosed a

little season. But at this point, our author goes on to talk now about the kingdom. And he says, let me read through verses 4 through 6 and then we're going to come back and I want to talk a little bit about the kingdom in broad form,

“And I saw thrones, (now this is a vision) and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection, (now we have the interpretation of the vision) Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.”

Now it is important that you notice that the latter verse, the 6th, is the interpretation of the vision and the thousand years is mentioned in both the interpretation and the vision. We are not justified in saying the thousand years occurs in the vision and therefore it's not a definite period of time, because it also occurs in the interpretation that follows.

Now here we are introduced to the kingdom, in the expression, “reigning upon the earth, they shall reign upon the earth.” Now this is one of the great doctrines of the word of God, the Kingdom of God upon the earth. Sometimes it's equated in the churches with the church. And people actually have the nerve to say that the church is the Kingdom of God. Now the church, if it is a believing church, is part of the Kingdom of God because God does rule in the hearts of men who have trusted him. But the church and the kingdom are not the same. The kingdom is the rule of God upon the earth. Sometimes, in our western civilization, the Kingdom of God is equated with democracy. And this is the strangest thing of all. Democracy is really a modern concept. Some people like to trace democracy back to Athens. They've not studied much ancient

history if they do. They don't realize that in Athens, a city supposedly the source of democratic thought, had two-thirds of its citizens as slaves. Would you call that democracy? As a matter of fact, democracy is a rather modern concept. And it's really a counterfeit of the Kingdom of God. It's man's attempt to emulate, upon the earth, what God is going to do in the ecstatic expression of his own eternal power, in the Kingdom of God, and in the eternal state.

We like to think that we have equal rights in a democracy, in the relationship that exists between one another, between one person and another, in democracy, is the relationship that will exist in the Kingdom of God upon the earth. Of course, I guess that democracy ideally should be that way, but it's nothing like the relationship that shall exist between the subjects and God. For in our concept of democracy we like to think of the prime minister as maybe the glorious, the most glorious expression of humanity, or in our American democracy, as the president as our representative leader in Washington, and we can speak back to him if we want to and we can even do things that he does not like, providing it's not against the law, and we can get away with it. But I want to assure you that the relationship that we have to Lyndon in Washington is not the same relationship that men shall have to God in the Kingdom of God upon the earth. That is a pure theocracy in which man must do the will of God. Democracy is an attempt, a counterfeit attempt, on the part of men to do what God shall do in reality, ultimately. Now Satan of course, is anxious to do that because then we won't want to have the Kingdom of God on the earth. But we shall never succeed and the Kingdom of God is sure to come.

Now at this point, I want to be sure to say something to you about systems of theology because you all are, will be exposed to this, sooner or later. The doctrine of the kingdom has produced three types of theological system. There is what we call postmillennialism. Now postmillennialism is an expression that comes from three Latin words, post, which means what? After. *Mille*, which means what? A thousand. Onus, which means what? A year. Now postmillennialism, derived from these three, the Latin

prefix, the Latin number, and the Latin word for year. Postmillennialism is a term that is used to describe the view that Jesus Christ is going to come to the earth not here, you see my diagram has already decided the theological question, did you know that? It's a pre-millennial diagram. But according to postmillennialism, Jesus Christ will come at the end of the kingdom, after the millennial kingdom, postmillennialism. Almost all postmillennialists died a tragic death by reason of World War II, because of course, you see, postmillennialism presupposes things are going to get better and better and better, in order that we might, by means of human effort, hand over to Jesus Christ when he comes, the Kingdom of God.

Well things have been getting worse and worse. And we have not only had little wars like in the days of, in the days before democracy, when wars were the work of aristocracy, things were really better because then you see, great conflicts were decided by a little group of men who fought, and everybody followed the fortunes of a few men who fought. That was really better for men, now democracy, everybody has to fight. Everybody gets shot at now. So democracy is not all together good, you know, ask a soldier in Viet Nam, how much better would it be if a few leaders should get together as the English guards, or the French guards and fight it out. Let the Washington guards or the United States guards fight with the Viet Nam guards and we'll accept the decision of the fight. Well, according to the theory of postmillennialism, things were to get better and better, but they have not, and of course they will not, and therefore, it's very difficult to find a postmillennialist today. I do know of one person who is a postmillennialist, but he doesn't really know why he is, he just is.

Now as a result of the death of postmillennialism, amillennialism came into existence. Now I should not really put it that way, amillennialism has been in existence for some time, but it was not popular. It came into popularity again as a result of the waning popularity of postmillennialism. Now, amillennialism, this is just like theologians, because while mille and onus are the same, a is a Greek prefix, which means “no”, it's the

negative, it's what we call in Greek, the alpha privative, the alpha that negates like known in English. And then what's the negative of un, well I've already said it, unknown, it's like the English un. So amillennialism would be no thousand year reign. So the amillennialist just does not believe there is to be any one thousand year Kingdom of God at all. He thinks that Jesus Christ is going to come at his second advent, and after the judgments of that time, we shall enter immediately into the eternal state, or into heaven. We shall not have a Kingdom of God upon the earth at all, amillennialism. Now many fine men believe in this, and some men who are not so fine also believe in it. But some Christian men who are genuine Christians, just as much if not better Christian than I am, believe in amillennialism as a doctrine. Now I personally do not accept amillennialism, it was not the belief of the early church. The early church believed in a premillennial coming of our Lord.

Now let me read you just a quotation or two, I think we've got time for that, and sometimes it's interesting to read some of the things that the early believers have said about the kingdom. This is Justin Martyr. Justin Martyr was the first great apologist of the Christian faith. He was born in about 100 A.D. and died in 165 A.D., so he lived right after the time of the last apostle, Apostle John. This is what he said about the kingdom, now in his book called *The Dialogue of Trifile the Jew*, Trifile asks, I should, let me, since this is on tape, it's not *The Dialogue of Trifile the Jew*, *The Dialogue with Trifile the Jew*. Trifile ask this of Justin Martyr, “Do you really admit that this place, Jerusalem, shall be rebuilt and do you expect your people to be gathered together and made joyful with Christ and with the patriarchs and the prophets, both the men of our nation and other proselytes who join them before your Messiah King?” And this is Justin's answer, “I and others are of this opinion, and believe that such will take place, as you assuredly are aware. But on the other hand, I signified to you that many who belong to the pure and pious faith, and are true Christians think otherwise.” just as I have said to you a moment ago, “But” he concluded, “I and others who are right minded Christians on all points, are

assured that there will be a resurrection of the dead and a thousand years in Jerusalem, which will then be rebuilt, adorned, and enlarged as the prophets Ezekiel, and Isaiah, and others declared.”

Irenaeus, who was a disciple of Polycarp, who was a disciple of the Apostle John, according to tradition, born about one forty, lived until about 203 A.D., has this to say, he spoke of, quote, “the times of the kingdom” unquote, when, quote, “the righteous shall bear rule upon their rising from the dead and when also the creation having been renovated and set free, shall fructify with an abundance of all kinds of food from the dew of heaven and from the fertility of the earth.” Papias too, who was born about 80 A.D. and lived to about one fifty-five, was a premillennialist. Now at the same time, in all fairness, I must point out that some of these who were premillennialists, also had extravagant views of the kingdom too. Papias taught, for example, concerning the millennium, that the vine shall grow each having ten thousand branches and in each branch, ten thousand twigs, and in each one of the shoots, ten thousand clusters, and on every one of the clusters, ten thousand grapes, and every grape when pressed, will give five and twenty metretes of wine. But even though that is his view of the kingdom, he still acknowledges the existence of the kingdom. Now he didn’t give any Scripture for those because there is no such Scripture for that description of the kingdom. But he had a very, very interesting view of the kingdom.

Now the final view that I want to mention is premillennialism. Now pre of course, is a Latin prefix that means “before.” And so premillennialism is the doctrine that Jesus Christ is going to come at his second advent before the Kingdom of God upon the earth. Now most evangelicals down through the years have believed in the pre-millennial coming of Jesus Christ. It was the belief of the great majority of the early church. I think it is the teaching of holy Scripture. And I believe that this is the doctrine that explains the Bible.

Now just a word or two as we close, about the kingdom itself. This passage of course, that we've been talking about, does not tell us anything more than that there shall be a kingdom of one thousand years upon the earth. It does not tell us, for example, who is the ruler. It does not tell us who shall enter into that kingdom. It does not tell us what nations shall be there. It does not tell us if the church shall be there. It doesn't tell us about the change in the vegetable world, and the change of the animal world. In other words, it just tells us about the kingdom itself. In order to gain all of these details, it would be necessary for us to go back to the Old Testament and to read many, many passages, which are contained in the Old Testament about the details of the kingdom. And there are many, many passages that describe this kingdom. One man said, “When the prophets describe the Kingdom of God upon the earth they dip their pencils in a rainbow.” In other words, the greatest promises of the Old Testament are promises that have to do with that kingdom.

Now as we conclude tonight I'm just going to turn to one of them, just one of them, literally hundreds of passages that have to do with the kingdom, and let's read it, Isaiah chapter 11 and verse 1. Now here is the divine great society. Now though Lyndon did not realize it, there is to be a great society upon the earth, which shall so, which shall be so much more wonderful than his pitiful great society, that you will never be able to recognize that society.

Now Isaiah chapter 11 and verse 1, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:” now notice, “out of the stem of Jesse” who was Jesse? The father of David, “and a Branch shall grow out of his roots.” In other words, Jesse is to have a successor, and this person is called a branch who shall grow out of his roots. This of course, is ultimately a reference to Jesus Christ as the son of David. Now verse 2, “And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and

of the fear of the Lord;” You see David has long died, but the Bible still speaks about a son of David who is to come. Now notice the character of his reign,
“And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: (that’s what human judges do) But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth:”

We are a great call today for justice, justice, we want justice. You would think that all of these people would be delighted to know that Jesus Christ is to come again and he’s to give men justice, white and black and yellow, who are believers shall have their justice, but men who call for justice do not want the just one to come again,
“And he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. (or the wicked one, I think the Hebrew should be rendered here, for it’s singular) And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; (now that happens today, only the kid lies down within the leopard today, but then they’re going to lie down together) and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. (isn’t that going to be interesting, a little child leading a lion) And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. (no danger of stepping on a scorpion then, even in Texas) They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (universal knowledge of God, finally verse 10) And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse.”

Now notice, it was in verse 1, “a branch that comes out of his roots,” a successor, the product of Jesse, Christ as David’s son, but now in that day there shall be a root of Jesse. In other words, the one from whom David comes, spiritually.

Now you remember when Jesus was here he asked the question, “Who was the Messiah, who’s son is he?” What about David’s son, who’s son is he? And then you remember he quoted Psalm 110. Well, if he’s not, if he’s David’s son, why does David call him Lord, saying, remember, Psalm 110, verse 1, “the Lord said, unto my Lord,” David said, “the Lord said unto my Lord” if he’s David’s son, why does David call him my Lord? Well of course the answer is that he was both David’s son and David’s Lord, because he’s the successor of Jesse and David, and thus has the Davidic promises of rule, but at the same time he’s the divine Son of God. So he’s the branch that comes out of the roots of Jesse in his human nature, but he’s the root of Jesse as the divine son in his divine nature. So he says, “In that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to him (or to it, that is the root) shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious.” In other words, there is to be a great time of the Kingdom of God upon the earth and Jesse’s son is to be the king. The Gentiles shall come to him. There shall be great peace on the earth. The animal’s natures shall be changed. It shall be in reality, a Kingdom of God.

In your church on Sunday morning do they say, does the minister open by leading in the invocation and then as he leads in prayer, does he finally, at the conclusion of his opening prayer say, “And as our Lord taught us to pray, Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name,” etcetera, “Thy kingdom come,” have you prayed that often in your church? I did, I grew up praying that. Nobody ever explained to me what the kingdom was. But I prayed, “Thy kingdom come.” Well this is what the Bible means when it says, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” the Kingdom of God. This is the climax of all of biblical prophecy. And it is that, and that concept really, which enables us to understand the prophetic word of God.

Time’s up. Next time we shall take a look at the eternal state, for what is heaven like? Let’s close with a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father we thank Thee for the great concept of the Kingdom of God. And help us to remember that it is the Kingdom of God. And may our thoughts and our hopes be centered upon the second advent which introduces this kingdom, because in it Jesus Christ shall be honored and glorified and men shall see him to be what he really is, King of Kings and Lord of Lords. We ask in his name. Amen.

Now, maybe they're some questions. Yes sir.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Preceding the tribulation? We don't know. As far as the Bible is concerned, the Bible states merely, that in the last days there shall be a nation Israel on the earth, a nation Israel. Since May 14, 1948 there is a nation Israel on the earth, but there is nothing in the Bible strictly speaking, that, so far as I know, could not prevent that nation being wiped out and then ultimately coming into existence again. I would rather think that to be far fetched myself but still it's very difficult to be certain that this is the nation that is, this nation is the group of people who are to be on the earth in the last days.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Well I did that because this is really about thirty, and I was doing this nineteen thirty-eight years plus is the length of the church age at this point. We don't know the length of the church age, but it began at 30 A.D. and this is 1968. In other words, it's been in existence nineteen hundred and thirty-eight years, and will be nineteen thirty-eight plus when this takes place.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Without the church, will they be aware that they are without the church? I think so, the believers.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Yes, but then, during this time a great number are converted. You see in the Book of Revelation the 7th chapter, in that vision that is described there, God describes how a great number of Jewish people are going to be converted.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] During the Tribulation, all of those.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Well of course, I don't know what they're going to think, but I would imagine they'll have a very good scientific reason. [Laughter] I imagine that it's going to come to pass in such a way that there will be, perhaps even several, nice explanations. But the Bible doesn't say anything about that.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] No, the people who went through the tribulation shall enter, but also Israel the Old Testament saints shall be resurrected at this time, and they then shall enter into the kingdom because you see, these, this kingdom age, is the fulfillment of the

promises made to Abraham. And so the converted Israelites of old, Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob and the rest, shall enter the kingdom, plus the church of Jesus Christ, for we shall rule and reign with him. So we shall be in the kingdom, the converted of Israel in the Old Testament, as well as those on the earth who enter without having died.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] Here? No, here, these are members of the church.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Right, these, and here, these are converted, these are resurrected here, meet the Lord in the air. The Old Testament saints are raised here, according to Daniel chapter 12, verses 1, 2.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] It is the glorified body, it is the glorified body at the resurrection.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] Right, 1 Corinthians, I didn't read the passage you know you can't cover everything, but 1 Corinthians chapter 15 describes what happens to the living. It says that we shall be changed as we go up. And so they shall be resurrected, because they died. That's the word for those who are dead, receiving a new body. We who are living, Paul says there, shall be changed. He just says we shall be caught up in 1 Thessalonians, because the question when he was talking to the Thessalonians was not the living but the

question was the dead. In 1 Corinthians 15 the question concerns the living too, and so he says, “They shall be caught up in a moment in the twinkling of an eye” you know, “behold I show you a mystery we shall not all sleep, we shall,” so forth, and he says, “and we shall be changed.”

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] No, that is not. Now many have taken it that way, but I think, wrongly. What I think he is talking about there is the fact that just before the kingdom, when our Lord comes, those who have not believed in him are taken away for judgment and held for this judgment. And so, taking chapter 13 of Matthew, with chapter 24, where this is found that you were talking about, it is the angelic beings who, acting as the agent of God, take those away for judgment who have disbelieved, so that the living believers may go on into the kingdom, so that everybody who enters the kingdom is a believer at the beginning of the kingdom period.

[Comment from the same audience member]

[Johnson] End of the tribulation. And so those who are in the field, and are taken away, are taken away for judgment. Matthew 13, if you’ll look at that in the light of this you’ll see. He talks about the fact that he shall send for his angels who shall take them away for judgment, those who were disobedient. Yes ma’am, question over here.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] We will, we are in the church, you see, and the church shall rule and reign with our Lord. We are identified with him, we are part of our Lord, you see, we are

in Christ, and so when he comes we shall come with him. When he rules and reigns, we shall rule and reign with him. Maybe to give you just a human illustration, to illustrate this, I think in a sense we are like the nobility of the kingdom. In other words, the church shall be our Lord's right hand so to speak, during the time of the kingdom, we shall rule and reign with him.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] No, he's talking about those that were, lost their life during the time of the tribulation.

[Question from the audience]

[Johnson] The question is, “If everybody who enters the kingdom is a believer, then how do you explain those who rebel against the Lord?” Well, the Bible tells us that those who enter from the tribulation into the kingdom, they live as human beings during the time of...

[RECORDING ENDS ABRUPTLY]