



Bible  
Prophecy  
and the  
Kingdom  
of  
Christ

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# **SEARCH PROGRAMS**

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**Topics subject to change without notice**

## **AUGUST 3 - THE THOUSAND YEARS OF REVELATION 20**

The central point of premillennial teachings is that of a thousand year reign of Christ on David's throne. The only biblical mention of a thousand year reign of Christ is found in Revelation 20:4. It is important in such a study as this to know what the verse actually says and does not say that is so vital to the doctrine. This program examines the verse in context.

## **AUGUST 10 - BIBLE PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT**

One of the strongest evidences that the Bible is the inspired word of God is the fulfillment of prophecy. The only infallible interpretation of prophecy is an inspired one. Meaning that when a passage says it is the fulfillment of a certain prophecy, it is. Prophets who prophecy falsely (if the thing does not come to pass) are to be rejected.

## **AUGUST 17 - PREMILLENNIALISM**

“Pre” means before; “millennial” has to do with a thousand; and “ism” means a body of doctrine. So premillennialism is that body of teaching dating back to the second or third century which says that when Christ comes again, He will establish the kingdom which He was unable to establish at His first coming because the Jews rejected Him and crucified Him.

## **AUGUST 24 - THE KINGDOM IS NOW**

From Old Testament prophecies, the preaching of John the Baptist and our Lord Himself, it is clear that Christ came into the world, not only to save the individual lost sinner, but to establish His kingdom and reign over it as King. To say He failed, would be to refute His claims to the Messiahship and to deny His deity.

## **AUGUST 31 - THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST**

One of the strongest hopes the Christian has is that Christ will come again. New Testament Christians believed strongly that He might come even in their own lifetime. That faith was motivation in time of great persecution and hardship. It inspired them to fulfill the great commission in their own day. The return of Christ is a vital part of New Testament doctrine and faith. What does God have planned for the world at Christ's return?

"THE THOUSAND YEAR REIGN OF REVELATION 20"

Rev. 20:1-8

As I was reading from Revelation 20 awhile ago, you probably noticed the frequent mention of "a thousand years," six times, in fact, in those eight verses. In verse 2 Satan is bound a thousand years. In verse 3 Satan would be loosed at the end of the thousand years. In verse 4 John "saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and," he said, "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." Verse 5 mentions the rest of the dead "who lived not again until the thousand years were finished." Verse 6 reveals a blessing on those who have had part in the first resurrection. "They shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years." And finally in verse 7 it's said, "...when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison." Only in verse 6, however, is there a mention of a thousand-year reign of Christ. And, there's no other mention of it in all the Scriptures. But from that one mention of reigning with Christ a thousand years, many doctrines and fantasies have risen. There are those who believe that this verse teaches, when Christ returns He will set up a kingdom and reign universally from Jerusalem for a thousand years over a kingdom of peace and plenty. Hence, they are called "Pre-millennialists." They constitute a great part of the membership of most evangelical churches --in many, an overwhelming majority. There are others who are called "Post-millennialists" because they believe Jesus will not come until the end of the thousand year utopian period. Then there are the "A-millennialists" who don't believe the Bible teaches such a thousand-year reign at all. So millennialism is a doctrine which focuses primarily on the establishment of Christ's kingdom and His universal reign as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Premillennialism is a very popular teaching right now as we approach the beginning of a new millennium in the year 2001.

But what we're hearing so much today is a mixture of dispensationalism and premillennialism. Briefly stated, dispensationalism is the idea that about 4000 BC God created the heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh day. And since the Scripture says one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day with the Lord (II Peter 3:8), we are living in the last days of the sixth millennium and the year 2001 will usher in the seventh, which will be the thousand year reign of Christ of which we read in Revelation 20.

Today we're looking at the one passage in all the Bible that is at the very heart of premillennial teaching. As we approach the passage for its meaning, we must remember that Revelation is a book of signs and symbols. This is apocalyptic language and is not to be interpreted literally. The very opening sentence in the book says, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him, to shew unto his servants things which must shortly come to pass; and he sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John."

We must also remember that any passage must be interpreted in its context. To lift a passage out of what comes before and after it, to interpret it any other way than in harmony with the message and purpose of the entire book in which it appears, to make it mean something the author never intended it to mean when it was written, is a gross perversion of Scripture. The apostle Peter speaks of those who so "wrest" (twist) the Scriptures as being unlearned and unstable and they do such to their own destruction (II Pet. 3:16). So, you and I don't want to do that, do we now?.

The third principle of biblical interpretation we must observe with this passage (as with all others) is that controversial and difficult passages must always be interpreted in harmony with all plain and simple teachings elsewhere. God never contradicts Himself.

Now, John was exiled on Patmos "for the word of God and testimony of Jesus Christ" (Rev. 1:9) --that is, for preaching Christ. He knew the disciples in the area of the seven churches (and others) were also suffering intense persecutions. The message which he received of the Lord, which he wrote them in this book was to (1) tell them God was conscious of the intensity of their persecutions, but that things would even get worse, (2) to exhort and encourage them to be faithful unto death, regardless of what comes, and (3) they would win because of Christ.

Where does this passage fit into that overall message of Revelation? It's the last of course. It isn't hard to figure that out from the very fact it appears toward the end of the book. But, it's a promise of victory. In apocalyptic language, those of them who endure will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. The question is; does this passage teach that Christ is coming back to the earth, set up a kingdom of peace and prosperity, and reign from Jerusalem for a thousand years, and these saints will rule with Him? Well, let's see.

Verse one says, "I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand." Note the symbolism: (1) a key, (2) a chain, (3) a bottomless pit.

Verse two says, "And [the angel] laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years." More symbols: (1) the dragon, (2) the old serpent, (3) a binding of Satan --the inference is with the symbolic chain of verse one, (4) a thousand years.

Now verse three, "And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season." The symbolism? (1) A casting of Satan into (2) the bottomless pit and (3) a figurative shutting him up till (4) the end of the symbolic thousand years.

Verse four: "And I saw thrones, 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, which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, nor in their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years." The obvious symbols in that verse are: (1) thrones, (2) the beast, (3) marks in their foreheads, or hands and (4) a thousand year reign.

Verse five continues, "But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection. There are only two symbols in that short verse: (1) the end of the thousand years and (2) a resurrection.

From just a reading of the passage, we've learned that a thousand year reign of Christ is symbolic. It would be the height of absurdity to pick that one thing out of all those symbols and say it is literal -all else is symbolism. The real truth of the matter is, it symbolizes victory for the ones persecuted for Christ. That harmonizes with other verses in Revelation. For example Revelation 2:7 says, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Revelation 2:10 says, ". . . Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:11 says, ". . . He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." Others are Revelation 2:17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21.

Please notice some things not mentioned that are so vital to the premillennial theory: (1) Christ's second coming, nothing is said about it in this passage, (2) the establishment of a kingdom, (3) an earthly kingdom (4) Christ sitting on David's throne, or (5) the Jews' return to Palestine.

It's clear from reading Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, that the purpose of Christ's earthly ministry was first to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10), and to establish a kingdom over which He would reign as King. So, immediately after His baptism of John in the Jordan, and His confrontation with Satan, He returned to Galilee and preached in the synagogues the good news of the kingdom that it was then "at hand" (Matt. 4:17). When He had preached so in Nazareth and in Capernaum, the people wanted Him to stay there longer. But He refused saying, "I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also; for therefore am I sent" (Luke 4:43). And He said, ". . .there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27). So His kingdom or reign was imminent at that time --during their lifetime.

The establishment of His kingdom was such an obvious part of His ministry that even Pilate asked Him, "Art thou the King of the Jews?" (Matt. 27:11). The question was prompted by the accusation of those who had brought Him there (John 18:28,40), a charge they knew He wouldn't deny. Jesus' answer was simply, "Thou sayest," meaning "Yea, it is so."

Jesus then went to the cross. He was crucified, buried, raised from the dead, then appeared to His chosen apostles and said, "All power (authority) hath been given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). Can you tell me how much more power Jesus would have if, indeed, He should come again and establish some kind of universal earthly reign? It's just a thought.

Premillennialism says that in order to fulfill the prophecies, Christ will return to earth to be seated on the literal throne of David in Jerusalem. Truly, Isaiah says, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." (Isa. 9:6-7).

But on the day of Pentecost, Peter preached that Christ had fulfilled those prophecies. Being inspired of the Holy Spirit, he said, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit (Christ was raised up for this purpose --to sit) on his (David's) throne; He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in (hades), neither his flesh did see corruption. This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear. For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, Until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:29-36). When a New Testament writer or preacher says an Old Testament prophecy is fulfilled, it's fulfilled, my friend. So Christ has already fulfilled those prophecies and now, as we speak sits on the throne of David ruling over His universal kingdom of which there is no end.

I hope you were profited from that program. One of the basic rules of biblical interpretation is to interpret the passage under consideration in the light of its context, the verses before it and after it. In light of that, it's interesting to observe that every time the kingdom is mentioned in the book of Revelation, a first century document, it's mentioned as presently in existence. For example: Revelation 1:4-6 says, "John to the seven churches that are in Asia... To him who loves us and washed us from our sins by his blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to God." Just as surely as Christians are

now priests --a royal priesthood (I Peter 2:9), the church is presently the kingdom of Christ. The same is true of Revelation 5:9, 10. // Revelation 11:15 and 12:10 show the triumph of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of the world because of the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of Christ. They point back to the cross and the resurrection of Christ, at which time all authority was given to him in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18; Acts 2:33-36). " Christ is (present tense) King of kings and Lord of lords (Rev. 17:14; 19:16).

But Christ's kingdom or reign for symbolically a thousand years, meaning an indefinitely long period of time, is not a political entity. He made that clear to Pilate. He said, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence" (John 18:36). The Holy Spirit says "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." It's because of its spiritual nature that many people don't see or recognize its existence today.

My friend, are you a Christian? If you've really accepted Christ as "Lord," then that's what He is. If you haven't received His kingdom, you haven't accepted Him as Lord. I pray you will confess Him so today. And turning from your sins in repentance, will you then arise and be baptized into His death and wash away your sins in His precious blood (Acts 22:16; Rev. 1:5)?

"BIBLE PROPHECY AND FULFILLMENT"

Luke 24:44-483

When I announced and began preparation of this message, my intent was to look at some specific Old Testament prophecies that related directly to the establishment of the kingdom of Christ and to show by the Scriptures that they were fulfilled in the first coming of Christ from His birth in Bethlehem to His ascension to the right hand of the Father in heaven. However, I found that that process would have to be, by its very nature, so detailed that I could hardly do justice to more than just one prophecy. So, I scrapped that idea to do what I pray will be more interesting and profitable -- looking at some very basic and sensible rules --principles, if you prefer --in the interpretation and understanding of prophecy.

My friend, I try hard not to be censorious, I hate that evil with a passion, but I am absolutely amazed, --no that word isn't strong enough-- I'm dumfounded, I'm flabbergasted at the wild recklessness with which some modern day self-styled prophets handle the word of God in order to piece together a personal fantasy of things to come. Due to preparation of these messages and a very strenuous speaking schedule I'm often slow in responding to some of my mail. But, when a letter begins with something like, "God came to me or spoke to me and told me blah, blah, blah," I have no intention of reading the rest of it or giving it a reply. It isn't so. It's either hallucination or fabrication. And, so much of what is being taught on TV and radio and by the printed page about the "end times," is just that.

God issued a challenge to the false prophets of old to successfully predict the future. In Isaiah 41:21-24 He said, "Produce your cause, saith the Lord; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show us what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that we may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare us things for to come. Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold, ye are of nothing, and your work of nought: an abomination is he that chooseth you."

The first rule for interpreting prophecy is given by Jehovah Himself. It's about how to differentiate between a true prophet and a false one. He says, "If thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him" (Deut. 18:21-22).

So what the Lord is saying is that if what the prophet prophesies, actually comes to pass just as he said it would, you can put your trust in what he says, but if what he predicts, doesn't happen in every detail as he says, he is a false prophet and you are not to heed his teaching. Some of today's foremost premillennial teachers have foretold the times of a "rapture" the return of Christ, etc in which they involved persons and events now long since passed, and their predictions failed. There's no other explanation; they just failed. Yet their books continue to sell by the millions and they continue to be popular with many unthinking people. Here's an example: "NOTICE TO ;THE PUBLIC! Everybody wonders when the coming of Christ will be. I know. December 28, 1988 the Holy Spirit said to me in a still voice: `The dead in Christ will arise first and when Christmas comes on Sunday again, start fasting on Friday. Christmas will come on Sunday again December 25, 1994. He will come at midnight." Well, according to God's rule for testing prophets, by their fruits, you should know this fellow is a false prophet. It didn't happen.

You can safely apply God's test to the Old Testament prophets. If what the prophets said would occur did occur just as they said in every detail, then these men were true prophets of God. Believe them. Trust their teaching. They're inspired of the Holy Spirit and they're credible. If what they foretold did not happen, those men, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Joel and others were false prophets. It's as simple as that.

That they wrote hundreds of years before the birth of Christ that the coming Messiah would establish a kingdom which would involve all nations of people, there is no controversy.

For example, some seven hundred years B.C. Isaiah said, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more. O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord" (Isa. 2:2-5). The New Testament records the fulfillment of his prophecy in Acts 2 and Ephesians 2.

Daniel likewise revealed the coming Messiah and His reign some six hundred years B.C. In his interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, Daniel is very specific that the Messiah would establish His kingdom in the days of the Roman rule (Dan. 2:44). That would have been sometime between 34 B.C. and A.D 476. Some premillennialists agree with that, but since they think it didn't occur then, they spin a yarn about the reconstruction of the Roman Empire before Christ returns, so as to fulfill that prophecy. One of the prominent ones simply mis-reads the passage. Daniel 2:44 says, "In the days of these kings (the Roman kings), the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed." He reads it, "After the days of these kings, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom..." Just a minor detail his disciples haven't detected or don't think is important.

After His baptism and temptation in the wilderness, Jesus returned to Galilee and began preaching in the synagogues of the Jews. Matthew and Mark both tell us that His message was "the gospel [good news] of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:14). He considered the establishment of the kingdom as a part of His earthly ministry, and essential to His identity as the expected Messiah of Old Testament prophecy. And part of His good news message about His kingdom was that it was at that time "at hand" (Matt. 4:17). He even went so far as to say that some of them would not die until they had seen it (Luke 9:27).

To circumvent that, some modern preachers admit it truly was the purpose of God and the intent of Christ to establish the kingdom at His first coming, but that the Jewish nation unexpectedly rejected Jesus and crucified Him, thus thwarting the plan. So, rather than to admit complete failure in His earthly ministry, He established the church, and He plans now to establish the kingdom when He comes again. But wait a minute: That's a denial of the absolute sovereignty of God. Did God not know the Jewish nation would reject and crucify His Son? Of course He did! Is He not God, could He not have prevented it? Certainly so, but it was a part of the plan from before the foundation of the world (Eph. 3:10-11; II Tim. 1:9-10, etc).

Some say, "What difference does it make? Is this not much ado about nothing?" Well, to deny that Christ established His kingdom when He was resurrected from the dead and ascended to the Father's right hand is to deny (1) the inspiration of the prophets, (2) the sovereignty of God and (3) the

Messiahship and Deity of Jesus. If it doesn't matter what you believe about these things, it doesn't matter whether you believe --in God or in Christ or in the Bible.

Another principle about interpretation of prophecy is to understand that it is not mere prediction. People studied in a certain discipline can make short term predictions on the basis of present conditions. For example, an economist may accurately predict an impending recession based on his study and his knowledge of economic histories and current conditions. But prophecy is so far removed from the existing circumstances that it is impossible for a person to know, without Divine assistance, that an event will transpire and how. So, when you hear a person predicting something about the return of Christ for example, on the basis of current events or personalities, you may know he's faking it.

The third principle I'll mention about interpreting prophecy is that there is Divine purpose in it. The purpose of the Old Testament prophecies about Christ and about His kingdom was to assure and prepare the people for the Messiah so they could know the nature of His teachings and His kingdom. Those prophecies, written to prepare the people for His first coming cannot be made to mean His second coming. The Holy Spirit says in Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, who at sundry (various) times and in divers manners (many ways) spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." No, no, my friend, the words of the Old Testament prophets are not to us. They were written for our learning (Rom. 15:4), but they were written to God's people to prepare them for the birth of Jesus and His earthly ministry of which we read in the New Testament. The passage I just read from Isaiah concerning the coming kingdom is not tell you and me about a future event. It was written to God's people under the Old Covenant and was to have been (and was) fulfilled at Christ's first coming. If it wasn't fulfilled, --by the Lord's own test, Isaiah was a false prophet. The fact that they knew the prophecies, but rejected the Messiah and misunderstood the nature of the kingdom takes nothing from the prophecies. If indeed it was God's purpose through the prophets to prepare the people for the advent of Christ and His kingdom, what good purpose can be served to make them do something else.

Finally, in interpreting Old Testament prophecy, we must know that the prophecy means just what the prophet meant it to mean when it was spoken or written. It cannot be made to mean something else at a later date. If what he meant it to say, didn't come to pass just as he said, he's a false prophet. There is no such thing as a postponement of prophecy.

Well my friend, Jesus Christ did establish His kingdom and is seated at the right hand of the Father to rule over it till He comes again. At which time He will deliver it to the Father --into its eternal state, and once more the Son will become subject to the Father (I Cor. 15:24). I want to be a part of that transition, don't you? Then, you must be born again. Jesus told Nicodemus, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:3-5). The "except" in those verses, makes the new birth an imperative --a "must" response. I hope you will --today.

When Jesus had completed His mission here below and was about to return to the Father, He said to His disciples, "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). The establishment of the kingdom was a major part of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Him. And He declared they were fulfilled. The millennialists have

the same problem with those prophecies as the Jewish nation did. They force them to mean a literal political force, despite the fact that Jesus Himself said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world..." (John 18:36).

"PREMILLENNIALISM"

I Cor. 15:22-26

Most of what we're hearing today is not pure premillennialism as I defined it a moment ago -- that (Christ will come and set up His kingdom and reign on the throne of His father David for a thousand literal years of universal peace and prosperity). But it's a mixture of that with dispensationalism, which holds to the idea that God created the world in six days and rested on the seventh. And since the Bible says that "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day" (II Pet. 3:8), all of human history is divided into seven dispensations. And it is further concluded that since the creation was completed 4004 B.C. that we are now coming to the end of the sixth day or sixth millennium, and the year 2001 will begin the seventh. Now since God created the heaven and earth in six days and rested on the seventh, that is supposed to mean the seventh millennium will be the one-thousand year reign of King Jesus over His earthly kingdom. Do you see why, then, the anticipation is building?

Well, we can't examine every detail of these teachings, but let's take a quick overview.

First is the idea that Jesus Christ came into the world at the time of His incarnation to establish His kingdom, His universal reign among men. But the Divine plan was thwarted by His unexpected rejection by the Jews and His crucifixion. But Jesus, foreseeing that event and rather than suffer total defeat, established the church instead as sort of an afterthought, or interim arrangement. Then He is supposed to have promised He would come again at which time He would establish the kingdom as originally planned, which He could not establish the first time.

He is said to have given a number of signs of His return, many of which are supposedly recorded in Matthew 24. It's taught that when He returns, He'll come very quietly. Many people won't even know about it. He'll snatch the saints away in some sort of a "rapture," but life will go on for the others, the people left on the earth, the wicked and the unconverted of course. The raptured will be with the Lord somewhere, for a period of seven years. Meanwhile back on the earth there'll be a seven-year period of great tribulation, --such tribulation as the world has never experienced. During the first three and one-half years of the tribulation period the Jews will all be returned to Palestine, and there'll be a restoration of their religion. They'll rebuild the temple which Solomon built, and revive the system of animal sacrifices of the Law of Moses of the Old Testament period.

The second half of that seven year period is supposed to be characterized by a great conflict, a terribly disastrous war which is called the battle of Armageddon. That conflict it is supposed, will end with the third coming of Christ, --this time with His saints, when He will establish His Throne in Jerusalem and rule the world in a universal reign of peace and plenty for a thousand years. At the end of the thousand years, He is supposed deliver up the kingdom to God; there will be judgement, and following the judgement, eternity.

Now, these are the basic and fundamental elements of dispensational premillennialism. Of course, mixed in all of this, is the idea of an anti-christ and a lot of other dressings, we don't have time to go into today. And I hasten to say that the general theory which we've outlined very briefly, may not suitably describe in detail the theory you've been hearing --or teaching. It would be impossible, even if we were disposed to do it, to detail every modern prophet's private speculation or supposed revelation directly from God. We've only intended to present a general overview.

There's no doubt that most premillennialists are sincere people. But there are some things I question about the basic tenets of their theology, and I'm sure you, too, want to know what the Bible

really teaches about these matters. So, we'll search the Scriptures to see. As you'll see, it does make a difference.

First, to say that it was a part of the Divine plan for Christ to establish His kingdom when He came into the world by the virgin Mary, but that He was defeated in that purpose by the unexpected rejection of the Jews and crucifixion, is to deny the Sovereign will and power of God! My friend, God was not defeated when the Jews rejected His Son. His plan was not overthrown at the cross. Neither was the crucifixion unforeseen or unanticipated by Him. The Holy Spirit says, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (I Pet. 1:18-20).

Less than two months after the crucifixion, Peter preached to the Jews who had demanded it. "Ye men of Israel," he said, "hear these words; Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as ye yourselves also know: Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain" (Acts 22-23). Jesus' death for our sins was not only foreknown by Almighty God, it was predetermined (pre-arranged, if you please) by God unto our salvation. To hold then, that it came as a surprise to Him and He was forced to change His plan for the Messiah is tantamount to a denial of God's infinite will and unlimited power, and a repudiation of His scheme of redemption by way of the cross.

Later, on the occasion of the healing of a lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple, Peter spoke to some of these same people again about the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and said, "And now, brethren I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God before had showed, by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, He hath so fulfilled" (Acts 3:17-18). So, rather than being an historical accident, the rejection of the Messiah, resulting in His death, was actually a fulfillment of, not only God's purpose but also His prophecies. He had foretold it! It had occurred just as He had planned it and the prophets had said.

Then, there's the matter of His establishing the church as an afterthought, an interim arrangement. My friend, this can't be because, with reference to his ministry to the Gentiles, Paul said it was "To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Eph. 3:10-12). So, the church is not an afterthought, not a substitute, not an ad-lib, thrown-together, provisional arrangement, but a vital part of God's purpose in Christ from before the world began.

It's obvious to the careful reader of the first four books of the New Testament, the "gospels," Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, that Jesus really believed He was the Messiah. He not only considered His mission as bringing individual salvation to the lost (Luke 19:10), but also to establish a reign over the community of those who receive that salvation and submit to Him as their King. The Messiah was to be a king; but there can be no king in the absence of people who submit to his kingship. So to deny Jesus His kingship, is to deny Him His Messiahship. If there is no kingdom; there's no king and no Messiah.

The Old Testament prophets had spoken and written for centuries that when the Messiah came, He would establish His kingdom. Premillennialists don't deny these prophecies. As a matter of

fact, they preach a lot about them, but they deny that Christ fulfilled them at His first coming, and apply them to some later appearance. Two things are important concerning "unfilled(?)" prophecies.

First, Jesus said He fulfilled them. In Luke 24:44, after His resurrection, He said to the eleven apostles (Judas had betrayed Him and hanged himself), "These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you," He said, "that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." Jesus fulfilled everything Moses said in the law about Him, everything in the Psalms and everything the Old Testament prophets had written concerning the Messiah. The Jews knew their Scriptures well, and if they could have produced just one Scripture in the law, the psalms or the prophets concerning Him, that He did not fulfill, they could have proved Him a liar, a deceiver and an imposter, and Christianity would never have been born. One of the weightiest evidences we have of the Deity of Jesus Christ is His fulfillment of every Old Testament Scripture about Him. Now, centuries later, some people are saying He didn't actually fulfill the kingdom prophecies, He postponed them.

And that brings us to the second thing we need to consider about prophecy. It's that the time element of prophecy is as critical as any other. If a prophecy did not come to pass when the prophet said it would, he was a false prophet. Deuteronomy 18:22 says, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously." Do you get the idea? If the kingdom prophecies were not fulfilled as they were supposed to be at Christ's first coming, but postponed, that makes Daniel and Isaiah and all the others false prophets.

I'm sure you can see now that it is important whether you believe the premillennial theory. It's critical to your acceptance or denial of other very basic teachings of the Bible. If it doesn't make any difference what you believe, it doesn't make any difference if you believe.

It seems that every time there's a new development in the mid-east, modern prophets have a hey-day with fantasies about how it all fits into some personal and private and individually conceived sort of a jig-saw puzzle of prophecy about the eminent return of Christ, something called a "rapture," and a "great tribulation" and the end of the world. You have only to glance at the church page of your newspaper to know what I'm saying is true. So, it isn't surprising that we're hearing a lot about it now with condidtion as they are over there. However, you've surely noticed, these so-called prophets and seers are constantly having to revise their fabrications. The anti-christ of yesteryear is not today's. The dates set a few weeks ago, were "miscalculations," and have had to be revised, yet they're purported to be Divinely inspired and delivered directly to the prophet. It's interesting, to me at least, to see how they revise their beliefs and teachings with every new book of predictions, and keep on selling them.

We hope you're a Christian and living the life to the very fullest. But, if you're not, we feel the urgent need to exhort you to become a Christian at once. Every day you delay in becoming a child of God, you deprive yourself of the love, joy, peace and all of what it means to be in right relationship with God. Put your faith and trust in Christ, be baptized into Him, buried with Him in baptism, risen with Him by the power that raised Him from the dead.

"THE KINGDOM IS NOW"

Mark 1:14-15

In spite of the fact that many theologians deny that Christ intended to build the church, it's obvious from his preaching that from the beginning He considered it to be a vital part of His earthly ministry. For centuries the great prophets of the Old Testament era had foretold the coming of the Messiah who would establish the kingdom of God and reign over it as King. And when Jesus laid claim to being the Messiah, the establishment of a world community of believers over which He would reign became a necessity.

To deny that that was his intent and purpose, or to deny that He did it, would be to disclaim him as the Messiah, the Son of God. In our Scripture text, Mark declares this aspect of his ministry to be a crucial point of the gospel which He preached. He says, "After that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel (good news) of the kingdom." Matthew indicates that right soon after his baptism and wilderness temptation in Judea, Jesus returned to Galilee where He went about "teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 4:17, 23). Luke gives it the same treatment. He says, "He went throughout every city and village, preaching the glad tidings of the kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). What did Jesus preach about the kingdom that made it such a glad message?

Well, our text says, "After that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the good news." For centuries the Jews had been reading their Scriptures and eagerly and anxiously looking forward to the coming of the Messiah who would establish the kingdom of God among them and rule over them forever. Now comes Jesus saying, "the time is fulfilled." Can you imagine the excitement that kind of preaching would generate? Their prophecies were going to be fulfilled before their very eyes. Generations of their foreparents had looked for, lived for and even died for what they were going to be privileged to see and experience! God's plan for redemption was to occur in their very own generation! And to enforce his promise, He added, "The kingdom of God is at hand." The time is approaching!

On another occasion He said to them, "I tell you a truth." Now wait a minute. Jesus says, "I'm telling you the truth." He always told the truth. He is the very embodiment of truth. He is truth incarnate. So why does He say, "I'm telling you the truth?" Because He wants to emphasize what He's about to say as clear, plain, unmistakable truth. He doesn't want us to miss it. He must have known there would be some who would be hard to convince. What is that truth? Here it is, my friend, listen: "There be some standing here (not our 20th century generation, but theirs, right there while He was speaking), there be some of you standing here which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:27). My friend, they were going to live to see the kingdom of God established. Did it happen?

Some say, "No, it didn't happen, Christ's plan was thwarted when the Jews crucified him, and He postponed the establishment of his kingdom until his return, --well not the next time, but the third time." They tell us that when He comes again, He will rapture the redeemed out of this world to rescue them from the great tribulation of seven years, after which He will come again and establish His kingdom and reign for a thousand years. But, it isn't so. Some of those people who heard Jesus preach did live to see the kingdom in existence and to be a part of it. The Holy Spirit says to the church at Colossae --there in that first century --that God had already delivered them from the power of

darkness, and translated them into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col. 1:13). And, the writer of Hebrews said, we have received a kingdom which cannot be shaken (or moved) (Heb. 12:28). And, John exiled on the lonely isle of Patmos said, "I was in the kingdom on the Lord's Day" (Rev. 1:9). That's good news to you and me, my friend, because when we become Christians, we too, are delivered from the reign of darkness and translated into the reign of God's dear Son. Right now!

Many people who teach a future reign of Jesus in Jerusalem look to Revelation as proof of it. But every time the kingdom is mentioned in Revelation, it is mentioned as presently in existence. For example: Revelation 1:4-6 says, "John to the seven churches that are in Asia. . . To him who loves us and washed us from our sins by his blood, and He has made us to be a kingdom, priests to God." Just as surely as Christians are now priests --a royal priesthood (I Pet. 2:9), the church is presently the kingdom of Christ. The same is true of Revelation 5:9, 10. Revelation 11:15 and 12:10 show the triumph of the kingdom of God over the kingdoms of the world because of the blood of the Lamb and the testimony of Christ, pointing back to the cross and the resurrection of Christ, at which time all authority was given to Him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18; Acts 2:33-36). Christ is (present tense) King of Kings and Lord of Lords" (Rev. 17:14; 19:16). So, the gospel is called the good news of the kingdom because it's a reality, not a dream, a fantasy, or even a promise of God for future generations, but for us!

But the kingdom of Christ is not a physical, political entity bounded by seas and rivers and mountain ranges; it's a spiritual kingdom, world-wide in its scope. When Jesus was brought before Pilate, the governor asked Him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" Jesus asked him, "Did you arrive at this conclusion yourself, or did someone tell you so?" Pilate said, "Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered you to me: what have you done?" Jesus replied, "My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now is my kingdom not from hence." Pilate asked Him again, "Are you a king then?" And Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth." In other words, if the kingdom Christ came to reign over was to be the kind that the Jews expected --and the kind that multitudes today still expect it to be, a political, economic system with a police force and standing armies --Pilate would have had a fight on his hand. "My servants would fight," He said, and no doubt the Son of God would have prevailed. But, It didn't happen that way and Jesus assured Pilate that He was no challenge to Caesar in that regard.

What kind of a kingdom is it then? The Holy Spirit says, "The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 14:17). That's what it's all about then, righteousness; it's a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy; not material possessions and world domination. If Jesus had come for that, He could have had it. The devil took him up into a high mountain, and showed him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And said to him, "All these things will I give you, if you will fall down and worship me" (Matt. 4:8, 9). And, there's no doubt about it, Satan could have delivered. Jesus knew there would always be people who would hunger and thirst after righteousness, and in his kingdom, they shall be filled, He said (Matt. 5:6), because that's what it's all about. Righteousness was originally spelled "rightwiseness," which expresses its real meaning; --being wise to the right and just things in life. That's the kingdom of Christ. Without the influence of Christ's kingdom, this world would be uninhabitable.

Another feature of the kingdom of Christ that's great news is that it cannot be shaken --it's an unmovable kingdom. A passage we mentioned in Hebrews awhile ago (12:28) says, "Wherefore we

receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear." Hundreds of years earlier Daniel interpreted a dream for old King Nebuchadnezzar in which the king saw a vision of an image whose head was gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron and his feet part of iron and part of clay. Daniel said these represent four (he specifically says four) consecutive world empires beginning with Babylon, followed by Persia, then the Macedonians, and the fourth was Rome. And he said, "In the days of these kings (that would be the Roman kings) shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2:44). To make sure there's no misunderstanding the Holy Spirit pinpoints the time of it all in Luke 3:1 as the fifteenth year of the reign of the Roman Emperor Tiberius Caesar that John the Baptist came preaching that "the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The angel promised Mary, "Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." That's a familiar passage, isn't it, in Luke 1:31-33.

Empires may rise and collapse. Thrones may topple and fall. But the kingdom of Christ is unshakable and unmovable. It isn't here today and gone tomorrow. It will endure for ever. In a world of change and uncertainties, it's great to be a citizen of the unshakable kingdom.

When Jesus comes --and He is coming again, my friend --the dead will be raised, Christ will then deliver that kingdom up to the Father and God will be come all in all. No, He will not come to establish the kingdom here on earth, but to take it away into heaven. After proving the resurrection of the dead in the early verses of I Corinthians 15, Paul confidently affirms, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order. Christ the firstfruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end, (not seven years of tribulation followed by a thousand year reign, then the end, but) then, when He comes again He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (vss. 20-24).

The kingdom Christ came to establish and reign over is a present reality. It's a reign of righteousness and peace and joy. It's a permanent thing; it will not be overthrown. And, when Jesus comes, it will be ushered into a state of even greater glory. My friend are you a citizen? Nicodemus learned that citizenship in the kingdom of Christ is not by natural birth; a person must be born again of water and the spirit to enter it (John 3:1-7). He must believe in Christ, not just give mental assent to his Deity, but lovingly and obediently put his trust in him by being baptized in water. And having thereby made a commitment to Jesus, to follow him all the days of his life, --unto death.

A person cannot be a citizen of the kingdom of Christ while still owing allegiance to the kingdom and the rule of Satan. He must renounce his loyalty to Satan to have citizenship in heaven as Paul said of Christians in Philippians 3:20. But, in this case it's abundantly worth repudiating fidelity to the old carnal world to be born again in order to take up residence in Christ's new spiritual and eternal kingdom. To do so, you simply do as Jesus taught Nicodemus to do in John 3:3: be born again. Nicodemus didn't understand how that was done, so Jesus explained in verse 5: Here he replaced the word "again" with the words "water" and "the Spirit." "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." The word "water" just means water, my friend. And, the only

command of Christ, that I can think of that requires water, is baptism. A person is born of the Spirit when he believes and he is born of the water at baptism. That's what Jesus was telling Nicodemus. I hope you will --today.

We're grateful you got to see the program today. You are the important part of our ministry. We say it often, but we mean it every time, if it weren't for you we wouldn't be here every week. And we'd like very much to have you worship with us in a church of Christ somewhere near you very soon. If we may assist you in locating a congregation in this area, please use our toll-free telephone number that we'll give you in a moment and call us. It's been suggested that I urge churches of Christ in the areas where this program is seen to announce on the church page of their local newspapers their association with the In Search of the Lord's Way program and give the location of their place of worship and the time of services. That will be a help to people who're looking, I'm sure.

Churches of Christ are not striving to be "just another denomination." We're not trying to be the only right denomination; we're not trying to be a denomination at all. It's our purpose to be the church that you read about in your New Testament --in faith --in doctrine --in worship --in organization --in our personal life --well in every way. We don't have a catechism, or confession of faith other than the word of God. That seems a bit strange to some people, but it's welcomed news to others, and if it's so with you, why not call us to learn more?

"THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST"

Heb. 9:22-28

When our Lord's personal ministry on the earth was almost completed and the cross was in view where He was soon to finish the work of redemption which the Father had sent Him to do, He announced his approaching death and departure to His chosen apostles. Quite naturally, they were saddened and were very sorrowful. Of course they were. In an attempt to comfort them, He made a promise: "I go to prepare a place for you," He said. "And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

Lest any of us should forget that promise, Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper. In the First letter to the church in Corinth (11:22-26), The Holy Spirit said that "He took bread: And when He had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you do shew (proclaim) the Lord's death till he come." Luke, the inspired historian says that the first century disciples under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, came together upon the first day of the week to observe this memorial. And it's on the strength of that promise, "I will come again," that his disciples continue, almost twenty centuries later, to eat the bread and drink the cup on the first day of every week. You'll find it so in churches of Christ everywhere. When you think of it, the continuance of the Lord's Supper in the present-day congregations, borders on the miraculous, and is one of the most convincing verifications we have, despite some modern teaching that He has already returned, that Jesus will some day "appear the second time," not to bear our sins as He once did on the cross, but to consummate our salvation. What a great promise! confirmed or sealed with the Lord's Supper! Thus, one of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity is the second coming of Christ and there are literally scores of references to it in the Scriptures. Christians live in joyous anticipation of the time when He shall come to receive his own. In other words, the Christian says, "The Lord said it; that settles it; I believe it."

But, there are two extreme views about His return: One is skepticism; the other is speculation. One doubts it will ever happen and the other weaves all kinds of fantasies about it, even to setting dates for it.

Concerning the skeptics, the apostle Peter warned that "There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But beloved," he said, "be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall meet with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (II Pet. 3:3-10).

There are six things to remember from that reading: (1) It's a mistake to grow skeptical and

faithless simply because our Lord has delayed His coming and the world just keeps goin' along as it always has. (2) You have to remember that time is not as important to the Eternal God as it is to us. The Psalmist prayed, "A thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night" (Ps. 90:4). Applying that truth to this situation, Peter reminds us that with God, a thousand years is as a day, and a day is as a thousand years. (3) When the Lord makes a promise you can bank on it. Christ said, "I will come again," so you can be sure of it, He said. (4) God is being longsuffering toward sinful man; because it isn't His will that a single one of us should perish; it's His will that each of us come to repentance. His delay is giving us time to repent. (5) His coming will be as unannounced and unexpected as a thief in the night. And (6), His coming will mark the end of this world and everything in it.

I suppose we shouldn't be too surprised that a world whose accomplishments have been as varied and of the magnitude of ours, would renounce faith in the unseen realities of the Spirit, to walk by sight. After all, we have launched our rockets to outer space to study the most distant planets of our galaxy and come to a better understanding of the world in which we live. We've even made human footprints on the moon, and despite all our problems, we are enjoying a better standard of living than man has ever known.

But, it is a disappointment when "the church" becomes so impacted with modern materialism and secularism that it abandons the fundamental doctrines of the New Testament to walk by sight and not by faith. Well, no one who is the least bit familiar with current religious thought and church life, would deny that it's happened, --not only in teaching, but in practice, --and without doubt it's at least a part of the cause of mediocrity into which the modern church has slipped.

Nor can we deny the other extreme: Speculation. It has literally filled the airways, and countless numbers of books have been written with every conceivable kind of theory about signs of His coming, a countdown to final things, and every imaginable (and some unimaginable) "prophecies."

But there are some things we can know because of what the Bible says. We can know, for example, that when Jesus comes, there will be a general resurrection of the dead. The Christians in Thessalonica were troubled about whether the dead would be at a disadvantage when Jesus comes; whether it would not be better to be living when He comes. Paul wrote them saying, "I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also 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 precede them which are asleep. 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. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (I Thess. 4:12-17).

While this is a very rapturous occasion, it is not the rapture you hear so much about in modern preaching. It isn't a hushed appearance of the Savior in which He quietly steals the saints away and leaves the sinner in great tribulation. As a matter of fact, you won't find that taught in the Scriptures at all.

In the apostle Paul's masterful resurrection sermon in I Corinthians 15 he says in verse 50 that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God: neither does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I show you a mystery," he says, "We shall not all sleep (meaning, we won't all be dead), but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall all be changed. For this corruptible

must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

The Lord teaches the simultaneous resurrection of the good and the bad. He said, "As the Father hath life in himself; so also hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this:" He said, "For the hour is coming, in which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:26-29).

From that we can also know that at the appearing of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, there will be a judgment of the good and the evil.

There is something about His coming, we cannot learn from the Scriptures. It's the time of the event; when it will be. The Scripture we read a moment ago from Peter said, "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night" --unannounced --no signs --no countdown, my friend. There will be no signs of his coming. Jesus himself declared, "Of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Luke 14:32).

So the word is "watch." In language too clear to be misunderstood, Jesus said, "Take heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is, For the Son of man is as a man taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his servants, and to every man his work, and commanded the porter to watch. Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at mid-night, or at the cock crowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch" (Mark 13:33-37).

Well, we've learned that Jesus Christ promised He would come again. We've seen that He's not slack (loose) about this promise. We've read that when He comes there'll be a resurrection of the dead, followed by a judgment of the righteous and the wicked. We've also learned from the word of God that no one knows when He will come, not even the angels, so the key word is "watch" and be ready. In the parable of the virgins, Jesus taught that His coming will not be the time for preparations. Our text today says that when He comes the second time, He'll come, not as Savior, but as Judge of the world.

My friend, are you ready for the coming of the Lord? He might not come for another thousand years or more. But He might come before the end of this program. It could be in your life-time or mine. But, whether we're living or dead, when Jesus comes, we'll be summoned to the bar of Divine judgment to give account of our stewardship of life. A faithful steward knows the importance of faith in Christ, as stated simply and marvelously by the Master himself: "...He that believeth on me, though he die, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth on me shall never die" (John 11:25-26). If we really do believe in Jesus, we believe in his resurrection, His second coming and judgment; for it was Jesus himself who said, "...He that believeth on me, believeth not on me, but on him that sent me...He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my sayings, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:44, 46).

But belief alone is not enough; for in another place the Lord says, "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 7:21).

It's certain that we're not saved by works, and it's equally as certain that we're not saved by faith alone (Jas. 2:24). In the last analysis, it's the blood of Christ that saves (Rev. 1:5) when we're immersed into his death (Rom. 6:3, 4). If you're not in a saved condition today, my friend, I beg of you to prepare for the coming of the Lord at once --today. Recently, we had a letter from a viewer who said, "Christ said to his disciples `teach them and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. I'd like to be baptized so I'd like to talk with a minister here. You said to let you know so I did." And, we responded promptly. We'll do the same for you.