

The Second Coming of Christ

Revelation 22:12, 13

The Millennial Kingdom

Revelation 20:1-6

Signs of Jesus' Coming

Matthew 24:8

This Gospel in All the World

Matthew 24:14

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put it in John 10, because not all of His sheep have yet been gathered into the fold by hearing the shepherd's voice. Or, as Peter put it in II Peter 3:9, because God is long suffering and He forbears and waits until every one of His has been drawn in by the gospel. So, throughout time, the gospel net is cast forth to gather in God's elect until finally one day the full body of them will be gathered as one, brought to faith by the gospel, brought to repentance under the Word, and then there will be no reason anymore for Christ to tarry. So, when this gospel has been preached in all the world, then shall the end come.

What an incentive for us to be busy in the work of missions as the people and the church of God.

So, I want to close with this thought: How do you personally watch for this sign? First, you do it by honoring the preaching of the Word. You put yourself under a faithful proclamation of the Word of God. You see to it that you are in a church that is busy with this work—not humanitarian work, but this work, the work of preaching the good news of the gospel. You take your families, you take your children, to hear the Word of God because you are interested, not in entertainment but in instruction from the Word of God. By this, God establishes His rule,

and His kingdom comes in your hearts.

Then, also, you have a personal, active interest in the work of the church in missions. You support the work of the church in missions by prayers and by giving. And you do this with the goal of the coming of Jesus Christ and the glory of His kingdom in the final day.

Then, finally, you do this, and you promote this sign of the coming of Jesus Christ, by your own witness, your own godly living, your conversations with others. The Word of God that you hear becomes a living witness in your words and in your life to others. This is how we live in view of the day of Christ's return. This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations and then shall the end come.

Let us pray.

Father, we pray for the coming of the end, and so we pray that the gospel may go forth to the ends of the earth with great power, gathering Thine elect with a view to that day when Jesus will come and make all things new. So we pray, Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 7, 2016
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The Second Coming of Christ
Rev. Rodney Kley

Dear radio friends,

I plan to begin today a series of messages on the Reformed Witness Hour on the Bible's teaching on the end times, or the subject of eschatology. Many people are interested in this subject and, because of people's interest in this, there is a lot of false teaching swirling around that confuses Christians and distracts believers from the true gospel and their Savior and His second coming. It is important as we consider this subject to keep our focus on Jesus Christ and His glory so that we are watching and ready for His return.

I am going to teach the amillennial, biblical view of the end times. I want to begin with three messages, one today and two in the next couple of weeks that lay down three basic, biblical principles for our understanding of the end times. Those three are these: first, that the Bible teaches that there is only one future coming of Jesus Christ; second, that the Bible teaches that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is present and spiritual, not future and earthly; and third, that the Bible teaches that there are recognizable signs of the coming

of Jesus Christ that God's people are able to discern.

I want to begin today by looking at the first of those, that the Bible teaches only one future coming of Jesus Christ. I want to do that from Revelation 22:12 and 13, where Jesus says, "Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last."

The subject of this message is, "The Second Coming of Jesus Christ." There are four simple questions that we want to ask: What is it? Why? Who? When?

What Is It?

First, what is the second coming of Jesus Christ? I am going to give you a definition. The second coming of Christ is His final, sudden, personal, and visible appearance in great glory on the clouds of heaven in order to raise the dead, to execute judgment on all things, and to make all things new.

This coming of Jesus Christ will be personal, that is, Jesus

Himself will personally come. There are other ways that Jesus is already coming, as we will see later in the message. But we refer to this as His personal and His second coming because, just as He personally came in His first coming in Bethlehem, so He will personally come in His second coming. Hebrews 9:28 says, "...unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation." We long for Jesus Himself to come. This is our prayer: "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

This coming will be visible. That means that everybody alive on the earth will see Him come. Revelation 1:7 says, "...every eye shall see him...they also which pierced him." This means His coming will be miraculous, not something that can be explained in scientific and natural terms. The word in the Bible for the coming of Jesus is "His appearing." I John 3:2, "...when he shall appear, we shall be like him." That means that He will make Himself appear, He will make Himself seen and visible.

And this coming will be with great power and glory. The New Testament tells us that He will come on the clouds of heaven with power and glory. That

means His second coming will be different from His first one. First He came in humiliation. He came as a servant. He came to bear our sins. He came in the lowly manger of Bethlehem. In His second coming, He will come in the glory of His Father (Matt. 16:27). This will be the resurrected and ascended and exalted Christ coming with all of His power to raise the dead and to be Judge over all.

That second coming of Jesus Christ, which we hope for in the future, will be His final coming and His only coming. Jesus does not say, "I will come first in a secret rapture. And then I will come a second time seven years later to set up an earthly kingdom. And then I will come a third time at the end of that kingdom." Instead, the Bible teaches only one future coming of Jesus Christ.

I Thessalonians 4:16, 17 (a favorite passage of those who teach the secret rapture of Christians here on the earth) teaches

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that the coming Jesus Christ in the end will be with the sound of the trumpet. It will not be a secret coming: "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with

political powers of the world are distracted from their main enemy, which is the church and Christ, and are busy fighting one another, so that the church has the liberty still to preach the gospel.

Even the coming of the kingdom of Antichrist at the very end of history is controlled by the progress of the preaching of the gospel. The Antichrist cannot rise until this gospel has been preached in all the world. That is even true of the natural disasters that take place. Romans 8 tells us that the whole creation groans and travails, waiting for the redemption of the Son of God. The creation wants to be redeemed. It wants to be made new, but it has to wait until all the sons of God have been redeemed and called by this gospel.

What a marvelous thing is this little power, this little power that is foolishness in the eyes of the world, and is so insignificant as far as man is concerned. It is the governing force of all of history. And by it Christ is establishing His kingdom in all the nations of the earth. This is the little stone in Daniel's vision in Daniel 2:34, 35, a stone that is cut out of the side of the

mountain without hands and becomes a great mountain that fills the whole earth. And this is the white horse of Revelation 6 that rides forth conquering and to conquer throughout history.

As we have indicated in earlier messages, the signs have a practical purpose, and Jesus gives us these signs with this calling, that we watch and be ready, that we pay attention and discern the signs of the times so that we are ready for His return.

How do we watch this sign? We do not do it by simply sitting back and observing the progress of the gospel to the different parts of the earth and throughout history. But, rather, because our earnest prayer is: "Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly," we do everything that we can to promote the preaching of the gospel to the ends of the earth. Or, to put it another way, the more earnestly we pray for the coming of Jesus Christ, the more enthused we will be about the preaching of the gospel in missions to the ends of the earth.

We could ask this question: Why is Christ not yet returned? And then the answer from the text would be: Because the gospel has not yet reached the ends of the earth. Or, as Jesus

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either accuses or excuses himself before the witness that God gives. Men hold the truth of God under in unbelief. But now God comes in the gospel to these same hard hearts and makes them even harder. This is the reason that Isaiah had to go and preach (Is. 6:9, 10), so that hearing they would not believe and seeing they would not understand. This is how the gospel is a savor of death unto death. And now, just as we do not know who the elect are, so we do not know who the reprobate are. We preach to one and all the same gospel, which God is pleased to use to gather His elect into the kingdom, and at the same time to prepare the world for the final judgment by leaving them with a witness and without excuse. And so the immediate purpose of the gospel is the gathering of the elect and the hardening of the reprobate.

But then we should see that there is an ultimate or a final purpose in the gospel as well. Jesus mentions this at the end of the verse when He says, “then shall the end come.” “End,” in reference to the last time and the time when Jesus returns, is not just the termination of time as we know it. But it is God’s purpose, His purpose in all of history is this end. His purpose is the return of Jesus Christ, the judgment not just of the world, but of all, and then the creation of a new heavens and

a new earth and the gathering of all things together into one in Jesus Christ.

The signs of the coming of Jesus Christ bring that end. They work together towards that final end. Jesus is constantly coming with that end and that purpose in view. And the preaching of the gospel, more than anything else that ever happens in the history of the world, prepares everything for that day. In fact, all the other events in history should be seen as serving and subservient to this great work of the preaching of the gospel. Jesus says, “This gospel...shall be preached in all the world...and then shall the end come.” The idea is that this is the supreme thing throughout all of history.

We see this when we put the sign of the preaching of the gospel alongside some of the other signs of the coming of Jesus Christ. For example, the sign of the great apostasy and the great falling away of from the truth; or the great sign of abounding wickedness and tribulation—all of these are responses to the truth of the gospel as the gospel is declared. So the gospel has to come first. The gospel takes priority. Or, we can look at the signs of wars and rumors of wars that take place throughout history. God causes these to continue to go on so that the world and the

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.” That teaches a visible and a public coming of Jesus Christ in power and in glory.

When you look at the book of Jude, you see that it uses the same language and says, “The Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all” (vv. 14, 15). When Jesus comes with the sound of the trumpet, this will be His final and future coming in judgment over all.

Why?

The question is: Why will He come? The text answers that question for us when it says, “Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” The purpose of Christ’s coming is to raise the dead, to execute judgment on all, to reward them according to their works, to destroy all that is wicked and sinful, and to create a new heaven and a new earth.

When Revelation 22 says “My reward is with me, to give every man according as his works shall be,” it teaches three things about the final judgment. First, that Christ Himself will be

the Judge on that day. He will be the One who is on the throne of judgment. The judgment of Christ will be universal: every man and every angel, every moral, rational creature will be judged. This judgment will be according to the works of man, and man will receive a reward according to his works. In this judgment, the justice of God will be revealed. And part of the judgment will be the destruction of this present world and the creation of a new heavens and a new earth, without sin, in which God’s redeemed will live with Christ and God to eternity.

Who?

The next question we ask is: Who will come? And the text explains that for us in the next verse. “Behold, I come quickly,” says verse 12. And then Christ says in verse 13: “I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.” Alpha and omega are the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet. Christ is saying here, “I am the beginning and the end and I am everything in between.” He is talking here about the history of this world and God’s purpose in the history of this world. We tend to look at history from a very narrow perspective, or to define it as the history of man, or the history of the universe, the history of this creation. We do this very often

without any reference to the beginning and the end of history—the creation and the purpose of God in history. Certainly, this is the way that secular historians or evolutionists look at history. They look at man. Where did man come from? What was the beginning of man? How will the creation end? What is the purpose of man's existence? We can fall into that, too, when we get caught up in the things of life and we have a very narrow and earthly and materialistic perspective on life. We can do that even when we think about the end times and the coming of Jesus Christ. We think about what is going to happen to us, what will happen to our children? And we are oftentimes filled with fears regarding the end.

The name of the One who will come here, the Alpha and the Omega, tells us that the focus and the purpose and the theme and the thread of all of history is Jesus Christ—that history has its purpose in Him. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning, the end, and everything in between. This world and this universe mean nothing and have no purpose apart from Jesus Christ.

That is important when we think about the end times and eschatology. Too often false teaching today puts a perspective of man and of Christians

on an earthly, future kingdom. So people are taught to have an earthly goal. And when they think about the Bible's teaching on the end times, they think of earthly purposes. That is true with regard to those who teach a future, earthly kingdom. But it is also true with regard to those who teach that this world is going to improve and get better and better towards the day of Jesus Christ. Then, God's people lose sight of the warnings and the signs of the coming and the times in which we live and we focus on earthly things.

Our focus must be the Omega—the One who is the Alpha—Jesus Christ, who is the Omega (the end) and who is central to all of history and who is the main subject of eschatology. He is the One who says here, "Behold, I come quickly." He is our hope, He is our confidence, He is our life, and He is our future.

When we look at Scripture, we can see this. If you turn, for example, to the Gospel of John, chapter 1, you see that Jesus is presented there as the Alpha, or the beginning, of all things. In John 1:1-3 we read this: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made."

in mind when He speaks of the gospel going to the ends of the earth—that after His departure and before His return the gospel would go to all nations.

Now, what is the purpose of this declaration and this proclamation of the good news of the gospel to all nations? The purpose is not only, from our perspective, positive. The purpose of the preaching of the gospel is not just to get people saved and to get as many people saved as possible before the return of Jesus Christ as though time is running out. If that was the purpose of the gospel, then the gospel is a failure. This presents God as a weak God who is, as it were, scrambling to get as many things as He can done before the deadline of the end of the world.

No, that is not the way to understand the spread of the gospel. Instead, the goal is the establishment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ, which is His spiritual kingdom, which comes through, not just salvation, but also judgment. Wherever the gospel goes forth, it always has a twofold effect. In II Corinthians 2, Paul says of himself as a preacher of the gospel, and all who preach the gospel in truth, that they are a savor of life unto life and of death unto death, and that, wherever the gospel comes, there will be this twofold effect—some will believe and others will be hardened in

their unbelief. The gospel is a two-edged sword. That is true even when the gospel comes to me, personally. Part of me has to die under the gospel so that I repent of my sins. And then I am quickened, as I believe.

So, as we think of the purpose of the gospel, we could say that the gospel has an immediate purpose, a present purpose in present history, and an ultimate or final purpose. The immediate purpose is the gathering and the saving of God's elect from all the nations of the earth. This is why we preach the gospel. We do not know who those are. We do not know who it is that God has determined to save through His Son Jesus Christ. The gospel is the means that God uses to gather them. So we preach the gospel to every creature. And God is pleased to use that preaching to gather His own sheep. Jesus says that there are other sheep who will hear His voice through the preaching of the gospel.

At the same time, the gospel has this purpose in the present, that it serves the hardening of the reprobate in their unbelief, and becomes a witness against them. That is the idea, in the text, of the gospel being a witness unto all nations. Yes, there is a witness in the creation. Man by nature has a hard heart to the witness of God. And Romans 1 tells us that his conscience

calls them in II Corinthians 5. And this tells us what the work of the church is in missions: it is to go and teach all nations (Matt. 28). This means that the church may not give up on this important task of preaching the gospel.

This is her charge, this is her commission—to bring the good news of the kingdom in all the world, through the preaching of the Word of God.

“In all the world.” This does not mean that every ear of every man and woman and child must hear the gospel before Jesus returns. If that is the case, He can never come. Nor can this mean that God can only judge people in the final judgment if they have heard the preaching of the gospel. No, the Bible tells us that mankind hears the voice of God and received witness against his conscience in many other ways, particularly in the creation.

Neither does this verse teach that before Jesus comes again there will be a mass conversion and a universal acceptance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. If that is what we are looking for, then Christ cannot and will not come again.

Rather, what Jesus has in view here when He says “this gospel must be preached in all the world,” is the geographic spread of the gospel as history progresses; that the gospel is an unstoppable force moving through the world, ex-

panding; that, as history progresses, the gospel will move from one nation to another throughout all the different parts of the earth till God has saved from every nation, tongue, and tribe, and in that, saved the core of humanity. And then Jesus will come again.

This shows us, first, that the signs of Matthew 24 cannot be limited to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. This gospel, Jesus says, must be preached and shall be preached in all the world before the end comes. But it also shows how close *we* are to the end of the world. It is true that we do not know the day or the hour, and so long as Christ delays His coming there is still work for us to do in the preaching of the gospel. But, at the same time, most of humanity has heard the gospel. Only about four percent of the world’s population do not have the gospel and the Scriptures in their language today. Jesus has this

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Here Jesus is presented as the eternal, second Person of the Trinity, who is equal with the Father and eternal with the Father, who was in the beginning, and by whose power and Word all things were made in the beginning. He is the Alpha.

Ephesians 1 tells us that He is the end and the purpose of all things. Ephesians 1:10: “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times he [that is, God] might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him.” Scripture is telling us there what God’s eternal purpose is with history. His eternal purpose is to gather everything together in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ is the goal and the end of all things. God will gather all things and will create all things in the new heavens and the new earth to bring glory to His Son, Jesus Christ.

These two ideas, the Alpha and the Omega, are brought together beautifully in Colossians 1:16, where we read concerning Jesus Christ: “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.” When it says “by him,” it means that Christ was the creator. And then everything

that ever happens in history is recorded in this verse: dominions, principalities, powers. These were created by Him.

And they were created *for* Him. That presents Christ as the Omega—the end or the purpose of all things. Everything in history serves Jesus Christ and His purpose. The gospel and Jesus Christ are central to all history.

This idea, the Omega especially, helps us to understand what we mean and what the Bible means by the end of the world and the end of all things. We do not mean just this, that someday in the future the world as we know it will cease to be and that all things will come to a grinding halt. But instead we mean this, that God has an end, God has a goal, God has a purpose in history. History is His story. And everything in history serves this purpose. All the world events that take place, everything that takes place in politics and economy, in the wars of this world, in the natural catastrophes, has a purpose. Nothing happens outside of God’s purpose. We are part of God’s purpose. The things that happen in our lives serve this purpose as well. Everything is working towards the day of Jesus Christ, when He will come again. “Behold, I come quickly...I am the Alpha and the Omega.”

That is important for us to understand when we think about the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, which we will get to in our future messages.

When?

The final question we want to ask is this: When will Jesus come?

There are two things that we see here in answer to that. The Bible never

gives us the day or the hour of the coming of Jesus Christ. Too many false teachers have distracted Christians from their faith and from the day of Jesus Christ and their calling as they watch for Jesus Christ's coming by predicting a day and an hour. The Bible does not teach us the day or the hour. Nowhere does it say that. Instead Jesus said, "No man knows the day or the hour." Instead, two things must be remembered.

First, that Jesus is always coming. That is here in the promise of Jesus: "Behold, I come quickly." Jesus does not say, "I will come." Then He would be speaking of something future. Instead He speaks in the present, "I come," or, more literally in the present tense, "I am coming." That means that Jesus' coming is continuous, that it is

on-going, that it is progressive, that all through history He is coming. He is coming in the present. He has been coming in the past. And He will yet come in the future. There will be a final phase of His coming that we spoke of already in the idea of the second coming—His final, personal coming. But He has

already come. He has come in Bethlehem. The Old Testament de-

scribes His coming as one event in the future that includes His birth, His return for judgment at the end of the world, and then His final appearing. The Old Testament Scriptures speak of this as one future coming. So we can say that Jesus has come in Bethlehem. He has come in the past in the pouring out of the Holy Spirit. He says in John 14, "I will come again to you," and He is speaking of Pentecost. He comes today in the preaching of the gospel and by the power of the gospel. He comes and abides by His Spirit in the hearts of His people. The gospel goes forth throughout all the world and He is coming into all the different nations of the world. He comes when He touches us in death. He said, "I go to prepare a place for you and I will come again and receive you to

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zens and willing subjects of His kingdom. It brings them into the experience of all the blessings of His kingdom. The preaching of the gospel, then, establishes the spiritual kingdom of Jesus Christ.

And, again, that is what Jesus said in Mark 1:14,

15 when He said, "The kingdom is at hand." That means that the kingdom is not our kingdom, the kingdom is not an earthly kingdom, it is not a man-centered kingdom, it is not a kingdom of earthly peace and pleasure. Rather, the kingdom is the gospel-conquering power that goes throughout the world and overcomes sin in the hearts of all God's people. And that is why we should want to hear the gospel. That is the coming of the kingdom into our hearts.

Jesus identifies the gospel very specifically. He says, "This gospel of the kingdom." That means there are rival gospels that are not good news. A gospel that says that man has to save himself is not good news. A gospel that promises earthly wealth and peace and that says that this is the kingdom is not good news. This gospel, this gospel of the righteousness of Christ and the rule of Christ by the work of His grace and Spirit

through the Word in the hearts of His people, this gospel must be preached, and this gospel will bring the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Nothing else will do

it. We may bring health and food and medicine to countries where there is poverty, but that does

not bring the kingdom of Jesus Christ. We may improve someone's opportunities in the world by teaching them to read and write and giving them an education, but this does not establish the kingdom of Jesus Christ. This gospel is the gospel of the righteousness and grace of God in Jesus Christ. Jesus says, "This gospel shall be preached in all the world." In the gospel of Mark, it is put this way: "This gospel must be published...."

The word here for preached emphasizes the character of preaching—that the one who brings the gospel is a herald of this good news. This teaches us that Jesus has in mind here more than just the content of the good news of the gospel going forth in printed material or over the Internet or through the witness of believers or even in the Bible. But He has in mind here the *preachers* of the gospel going forth, men who would be His official representatives, ambassadors for Christ as Paul

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that all of history waits for this. All of history serves this. All the other signs of the coming of Jesus Christ serve this one: that the gospel be preached in all the world.

In order to understand this, we first must understand what the gospel is. I say three things. First, the gospel is the good news of deliverance for sinners. It is the good news of the death of Jesus Christ in the place of sinners. It is the good news of the power of the grace of God to deliver us from the power of sin. Do you struggle with the power of sin? Are you weighed down with the guilt of sin? Do you look around you at the world that is obsessed with sin? Here is the good news: God, in Christ Jesus, has delivered sinners.

In the second place, the gospel is the call that goes out to sinners to repent and believe. That is an essential part of what the gospel is. When Jesus came preaching the gospel in Mark 1:14, 15, we read this: "Now 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 gospel." As He preached the gospel, He called sinners to repentance over their sins. Now, you will not understand the good news of the gospel unless first you see your sin and

repent. That means that the gospel cannot be good news for all men. It is a good news for those who repent. It is offensive to others but it is not good news for them.

The third thing we should understand about the gospel is that, that the gospel's focus is the glory of God. Central to the gospel is who God is—a declaration of who God is—not just what God gives or what we get. But this, that God is righteous and that God is gracious. That, because He is righteous, our sins require a payment in order for God and His wrath to be turned away from us, and that God is gracious—that in His grace He has given His Son Jesus Christ as the substitute for sinners. This is the good news of the gospel.

Now, you notice here in Matthew 24 that Jesus describes the gospel further this way: "And this gospel of the kingdom." Here He ties the kingdom with the gospel. He means not only that the content of the gospel is the kingdom, but that by the gospel God establishes His kingdom and His rule. And that tells us what the kingdom is. What does the gospel do as it comes? It brings sinners to repentance, it brings them into reconciliation with God, it brings them under the rule of Jesus Christ so that they bow to Him and they worship Him. It makes them citi-

myself in death." He comes to receive His own to Himself. He comes in judgment in death to unbelievers. He comes in judgment also to churches and those who rebel against His word. He says in Revelation 2, "Repent, for I will come and remove the candlestick from you." He is coming. He is always coming. And all the signs of His coming are simply this: the sound of the footsteps of Jesus Christ continually coming through history.

We should not look for a particular day or hour in which Jesus will come, but we should realize that we are living in the last days—that the personal coming of Jesus Christ is the next great event on God's salvation calendar and that our calling in the present is to watch for His coming. This is what He tells us to do.

What does He mean, then, when He says, "I come quickly"? That is the second thing that we notice here about His coming. He says that three times here in Revelation 22—the last chapter in the Bible. The Bible also speaks of the nearness of the end. Sometimes, in light of the passing of so many years—2,000 years of history—since this promise was made, we wonder, Where is His coming, when is His coming?

We should be encouraged by this. When Jesus says, "Behold,

I come quickly," He makes a promise to us. We should understand that time, in a sense, is relative. Our time reference is the span of our lives or what we know about history—maybe a century or so of history. But Christ is speaking here as the Alpha and the Omega, the eternal God. And He has in view all of history, and all the purposes of God, and He says, "I come quickly." He means by that, He will come as quickly as He can.

From the Bible we know that Jesus Christ will not come until at least these two promises are fulfilled: in Matthew 24:14, "This gospel must be preached in all the world, as a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come." He promises not to come until the gospel has been preached in all the world. Then, in John 6:37 He says, "All that the Father giveth to me shall come to me and not one of them," He promises, "will be lost." Why does He delay (from our perspective) His coming? He comes as quickly as He can. But He must keep these promises: to preach the gospel in all the world so that every one of His own, His elect, can be gathered by believing and hearing that gospel.

It is with those two promises in mind that He comes as quickly as He can. He will not linger a moment longer than is necessary. So, again, this

means that the next main event in history, the next thing that God has planned on His salvation calendar, is the coming of Jesus Christ. He stands at the door, He is ready to come.

That is our comfort. God will not allow the wicked to accomplish their evil designs. When Jesus speaks of the last days, He

speaks of the shortening of those days for the elect's sake. He speaks of His personally coming to confront the Antichrist. Satan will not prevail. Instead, when the wicked are saying, "Peace and safety," and are immersed in the pleasures of this life and in the venom of hatred against God's people, then He will come, as a thief in the night against them.

So are you ready? Are you watching for the coming of Jesus Christ? Here is a good test of that. Do you pray, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus"? Do you pray that He will come in the Spirit? Do you pray that He will come in the preaching of the gospel? Do you pray that He will come to *you* in your death? Do you pray that He will come in His final, glorious appearance as Judge of all? Do you pray that He will come as your deliverer?

Too often, if we are not overcome with fear of His coming, we are overwhelmed with the pleasures of this life. This promise of Jesus calls us to look away from the earth and to

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look to Him, the Alpha and the Omega, to say with the bride of Christ in verse 17, "Come." That is the prayer of God's people in the world. Like a bride whose husband has gone away on foreign deployment and who misses him, cannot wait for him to return, and prays every day for his return—so the bride of Jesus Christ, the church, believers, say, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus." That is our prayer.

Father, we thank Thee for this beautiful word and this wonderful promise that Jesus will come again and that, when He comes, He will deliver us from sin, He will make all things new, and He will bring us into His eternal rest forever. We do not look for an earthly kingdom but we look for a future, glorious, perfect kingdom in which righteousness will dwell in heaven, in Thy presence. We pray, Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 28, 2016
No. 3817

This Gospel in All the World
Rev. Rodney Kley

Dear Radio Friends,

Let us take our Bibles today and open to the Gospel of Matthew, chapter 24:14, where Jesus writes, "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Usually when we speak of something as a sign of the times, we mean that in a kind of a negative way. We learn about a great natural calamity and we say, "It's a sign of the times." We hear of wars, we say, "It's a sign of the times." We look at where our nation is morally and spiritually and we say, "It's a sign of the times." We hear of the church under persecution and we say, "It's a sign of the times." We mostly think of that and use that expression in a negative way.

Today, though, as we begin to look at the different signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, I want to start on a very positive note from Matthew 24:14. Here Jesus tells us that before He comes again and before the end of the world, the gospel, which is the good news of salvation through His suffering and death, must and will be preached in all the world. Only

after this has happened will the end come. What a positive perspective on history and on the signs of the times that is! When we hear about missions or we hear about the gospel going to new parts of the earth where it has never been before, then we should say, "It is a sign of the times." As we wait for Jesus to come, one of the things that we should want more than anything else is the fulfillment of this verse—that the gospel be preached in all the world. That means that those who watch and wait for the coming of Jesus Christ will have an interest in and a zeal for the work of missions.

This is my first message on the signs of Jesus' return. Last week we looked at the subject of the signs more generally. Today we begin to look at them more specifically. I have chosen this one first because it is the central and most important sign of all the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ. The reason that Jesus, at least from our point of view, delays His coming is that this sign must first be fulfilled. This gospel must first be preached in all the world. That means

pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." This parable teaches us that these signs tell us that the coming of Jesus Christ is closer and closer. The danger of the future millennial views that deny these signs is this: God's people are told that they do not need to watch and they do not need to prepare for the coming of Jesus Christ. This is especially dangerous because it encourages participation in a godless culture. That is part of the deceit of the false teachers and Antichrist in the last days. Eat and drink; take your ease; all things continue as they were. Then suddenly destruction will come. We must observe the signs. That does not require intelligence but it requires a spiritual alertness that is instructed by the Word of God.

But the practical purpose is not only to motivate us to watch. It is also that we be comforted. These signs remind us not only that Jesus is coming, but that He is in control of all these things. That is why in Matthew 24:6 He says that when we see all these things we should

not be troubled. We have no reason to be afraid. In fact, the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ are an answer to the combined prayers of the church militant and the church triumphant. The church in heaven and the church on earth that says, "How long," and "Come, Lord Jesus." This is Jesus' answer. He is saying in the signs, "I'm coming." So when these things begin to come to pass, look up and lift up your heads for your redemption draws nigh. Jesus is coming. This is the answer to the prayers of God's people.

Let us pray.

Father, we pray, Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly.

*These signs remind us
not only that Jesus is coming,
but that He is in control
of all these things.*

As we pray that and experience in this world tribulation, as Jesus teaches us we will, we

pray that we may have grace to continue to live as pilgrims and strangers here on the earth with our eyes fixed on heaven and the day when Jesus will come and the glory that will follow for us in heaven. Come, Lord Jesus, yea, come quickly. Amen.

THE REFORMED WITNESS HOUR

February 14, 2016

No. 3815

The Millennial Kingdom

Rev. Rodney Kleyon

Dear Radio Friends,

Last week we began a new series on the Reformed Witness Hour on the subject of eschatology, the Bible's teaching on the end times. This study is not an "arm-chair study," in which we try to figure out and unlock mysteries concerning the future that have nothing to do with us today. Instead, the study of eschatology lays before us the main calling that we have to watch and be ready for the day of the Lord.

I began this series by looking at three main truths from the Bible. Last week we looked at the fact that there is only one future coming of Jesus Christ that will be the end of all things, the judgment, and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth.

The second main truth is this, that the rule and kingdom of Jesus Christ is not future and earthly, but present and spiritual. That is the one we want to look at today.

Third, there is the principle that there are identifiable signs of the coming of Jesus Christ of which we must be aware as Christians.

Today, we look at the second one, that the kingdom and rule

of Jesus Christ are present and spiritual. We are going to do that from the very popular passage of Revelation 20:1-6, which speaks of the millennium, or the thousand-year kingdom of Christ. For the sake of time, I am not going to read that right now. I ask you, if you have a Bible handy, to open it. We will make references to these verses as we go along.

In these verses, we have the binding of Satan for a thousand years and Jesus Christ ruling with His saints. Much of the confusion and false teaching about the end times swirls around and comes from a misinterpretation of this passage.

There are three basic views of the millennium. The first is the premillennial view, which teaches that the millennium is a future, earthly kingdom and that, prior to this, that is, "pre-millennial," Christ will come two times: first, in a secret rapture in which all true Christians will be taken up into a temporary, seven-year holding pattern in the skies during which time the kingdom of Antichrist will rise and the Jews, because of severe persecution, will be converted en masse. Then, at the end of that seven years, Jesus will come again with

the Christians and establish the thousand-year, earthly kingdom of peace and prosperity. That is premillennialism.

The second view is that of postmillennialism, which also teaches that the thousand-year kingdom of Jesus Christ is mostly future and earthly. This view teaches that in the last one thousand years or so of history here on earth, Christianity will make great strides, the world will become a better place as a result, and there will be a golden-age of gospel and prosperity. Not only will the majority be converted, but society will be dominated by Christians, so that world economies and politics are run according to biblical principles. Then, at the end of that period of time, Jesus will come (*post-millennium*), and He will come into a mostly good world, will destroy the few remnants of sin and Satan, and will usher in a new heaven and a new earth.

Both of those views take the passage in Revelation to refer to an earthly, future kingdom.

The other view, which has been labeled “*a-millennialism*,” is the one that I will be teaching and explaining in this message. This view does not deny that there is a millennium but, rather, teaches that the thousand-year reign of Revelation 20 is a present, spiritual reality, that Jesus reigns from

heaven throughout the entire New Testament age by His Spirit and His Word, and that it is during this time that Satan is bound for a thousand years.

Let us look at Revelation 20 and explain that.

First, we notice this, that this is the only mention, in the entire Bible, of the millennium. When you have something like that, you need to consider it in its biblical context. What does this mean in the book of Revelation and in its broader context—in the entire Scripture? How does it fit with the rest of the teaching of the Bible, and how does the rest of Scripture shed light on this passage?

First, about this book. Let us notice three things. The book of Revelation is written to seven specific churches that were being persecuted and were surrounded by a godless culture. It is not a speculative book that only tells about things in the future that have nothing to do with the present, but it is written to encourage the church in the world that is being persecuted. It has a practical purpose.

Second, the book of Revelation is a book of prophecy that tells about things in the end times. But, as a book of prophecy, it cannot be read chronologically. It is not describing different periods of history that will unfold one after another. Instead, the seven main sec-

illustration teaches us is that labor pangs are painful. So also will be the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ. Which mother enjoys the pains of labor and childbirth? No one. So it is with the coming of Jesus Christ. It will bring many sorrows and hurt and pain for God’s people too. That is even true already today. Think of the massive loss of human life that comes as the result of natural disasters. Think of the tribulation and persecution that comes against God’s people all throughout history and the many who have been slain for their faith. There is pain in the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ.

But that points us to the last characteristic here, the sixth thing that we see in this illustration, and that is this: this is not pain without a purpose. But instead, it is a pain that has a goal. These signs bring Jesus Christ. So it is with labor. The pain of childbirth produces the child. So we do not stand bewildered as God’s people when we see all these things taking place in nature or in the nations or even in the church. Things are not falling apart. It is all under the control of King Jesus. He is coming. All of it will produce His final glorious coming on the clouds of heaven. Jesus Himself uses that illustration to help us understand the last days when in John 16 He says in verse 21: “A woman when she is in

travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.” Then He says to His disciples, “And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.” What joy there will be in the day when Jesus Christ comes again!

I want to close by pointing to the practical purpose of the signs. There are really two things here. The first is that we should watch for the day of Jesus Christ, and that He sends us these signs to encourage us to watch. You find that later in Matthew 24:32 and 33 when Jesus gives the parable of the fig tree. You have a parallel passage to that in Luke 21:28 and following, where we read of the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ. Jesus is talking about disaster in the creation, He is talking about war among the nations, He is talking about persecution in the church. “When these things begin to come to pass,” Jesus says, “then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; when they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to

Pentecost in the pouring out of the Spirit. He comes throughout history in the preaching of the gospel. He comes to us in our death. In all the events of history, this is His story, and Jesus is coming, and coming as quickly as He can. The signs are the footsteps of the coming of Jesus Christ.

Third, this illustration helps us to see that these signs will increase in frequency and intensity the closer we get to the end. At the beginning of labor, the painful contractions are not as intense and they are not as frequent. They sometimes begin even months earlier. But as the time of the day of the child's birth gets closer, the labor becomes more intense and those signs cannot be ignored anymore. They are longer and they are harder and they are more frequent. And so it is with the coming of Jesus Christ. At first the signs of His coming are not so difficult. They are not so frequent. They are not so intense. Perhaps we might even think of them as kind of a natural occurrence. But, as time goes on, they will increase and they become more intense and they cannot be ignored anymore. They bring more pain. They affect more people. They become more frequent the closer and closer we get to the day of Jesus' return.

Fourth, this illustration

teaches us that no one knows the day or the hour of the coming of Jesus Christ. All throughout history, and even in contemporary times, there have been those who have tried to predict the day of Jesus' return. Jesus tells us very plainly that no one can do this. "No man knows the day or the hour." He says that even He Himself, the Son of man in His state of humiliation, did not know the day or the hour. He will come as a thief in the night. That is true with regard to a birth as well. There are labor pangs and there are contractions, but even with all the technology that can see a child and measure its size and length and spacing of the contractions and the intensity of them, one can still only approximate the time that the child will be born. A woman can go into full labor and it can take days before the child is born, or sometimes only minutes. You see, what is important is not that we know the exact timing, but that we are ready for it. So it is with labor. If a woman is at forty or forty-two weeks in her pregnancy, she does not travel the world or get on an airplane or go hiking in the woods. But she is close to a hospital and she is ready for the time when the child will be born. Similarly, we do not know the day or the hour of Jesus' return. But we should watch and be ready.

The fifth thing that this

tions that can be identified in this book must be considered as parallel to one another. John sees the same history from seven different perspectives. As the book progresses and these seven sections unfold, the focus comes more and more on the last days. In the last three chapters in this book we have the last section, where the focus has shifted from what is happening on earth to the spiritual realm and to Satan and to his final destruction at the end of time.

Third, we must understand that the book of Revelation is almost entirely symbolic. It is made up of visions that cannot be taken literally. You see that with the numbers in the book of Revelation: twenty-four elders represent the Old and New Testament churches; the hundred forty-four thousand represents the whole body of God's elect gathered in heaven. Or, you have the vision of the beast with seven heads and ten horns that cannot be taken literally, but it represents the devil and his dominion in the earth. So, the book of Revelation is symbolic. You even have that in this passage. There is a spirit, the Devil, that is bound with a chain; there is a pit without a bottom. Those obviously cannot be taken literally.

Looking more closely at Revelation 20:1-6, we see a clear division here in the description of the millennium. The first

three verses look at this millennium from the perspective of earth and what happens on earth. The second three verses (vv. 4-6) look at it from the point of view of heaven. That is really what the millennium is: it is the binding of Satan so that he cannot do something on the earth, and it is the rule of Christ, from heaven, with the saints.

In the first three verses, we have the binding of Satan. The first verse describes for us the Devil's jailor, an angel with a key. "And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand." He is sent from heaven, not as a heavenly messenger to announce something, but as a heavenly servant to do something. So, he has a key and a chain in his hand.

In verses 2 and 3, with that chain, "he laid hold on the dragon, that old serpent, which is the Devil, and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, and cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up." Now, what draws our attention here is that Satan is described with four names: the dragon, the old serpent, the Devil, and Satan. That is not done only to describe to us the dreadfulness of Satan, but also to show the absolute power of God over Satan. He is just an angel, a creature, with a name. As Luther wrote: "One

little word shall fell him.” God is sovereignly powerful over him.

Verse 3 describes for us the pit and his binding. He was cast into this pit and shut up and the angel “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 be loosed a little season.” We are familiar with the picture of a pit. Paul and Silas were cast into a prison. Jeremiah was cast into a pit. With chains, Peter was bound hand and foot and locked in a prison. What is this pit? This pit is not hell, which is described a little later in the chapter as the lake of fire. Nor is it a literal pit on earth, because it is a bottomless pit and that cannot be literal. Instead we take this as a figurative description of God’s placing a restraint on the power of Satan during the millennium.

That helps us to understand the millennium. What is the millennium? Satan is said to be bound for this length of time described as a thousand years that is mentioned six times in this passage. Should we take this thousand years literally? Why should we? The passage itself is full of symbolism. Almost all the numbers that are used in the book of Revelation are also symbolic. It does not fit with the book of Revelation to take this as a literal thousand years. It certainly does not fit

with the rest of Scripture, based on this one passage, to speak of a lengthy earthly kingdom. Instead, a thousand in the Bible is a picture of completeness. You have, for example, this in Psalm 50:10: the cattle on a thousand hills are His. Do we take that number one thousand literally, so that the cattle on hill number one thousand and one are not His? No, the thousand refers to completeness. It means the cattle on all the hills are His. So, here, the thousand years refers to a complete period of history: ten times ten times ten—ten being the number of completeness in the Bible and a cube pointing to perfection.

So, when is this period of time called here a thousand years? To answer that, you have to answer another question—what does it mean that Satan is bound? This period is marked at its beginning by the binding of Satan and at its end by the loosing of Satan. So we ask the question: What is different during this thousand years, from before the thousand years and after the thousand years? In the “purpose clause” in verse 3, we learn what is different. God’s purpose in binding Satan is “that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled.” Verses 7-9 that describe to us what happens at the *end* of the thousand years help us to understand that. When the thousand years are

is described for us in verse 8. In verse 8 Jesus says that “All these are the beginning of sorrows.” The focus here should not be on the word “beginning,” but on the word “sorrows.” This word “sorrows” refers to the specific pain that a woman experiences in pregnancy and childbirth. Jesus is talking about birth pangs and using an illustration here to teach us how we should understand the signs of His coming. This illustration helps us to see at least six different characteristics of the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ.

The first is this, that the signs are a necessary part of His coming. They are not just signposts on a highway that you travel along and you realize that you are getting closer and closer. Jesus does not give us a timeline of these signs but, instead, this illustration helps us to see that the signs are always there and that they increase in intensity and frequency the closer they come to the time of childbirth, and they are a necessary part of the birth of a child. It is, for example, like the sound of a train coming. You hear the horn and the engines far off. You hear the humming on the

tracks even before you can see the train itself. If the train were not coming, those noises would not exist. But the coming of the train produces the signs of its coming, similar to the coming of a storm. There are dark clouds; there is wind, and rain, and hail, and lightning, and thunder—all of which are a part of the storm but tell us that the storm is coming. So it is with birth pangs. In the coming of Jesus Christ, the signs of that coming are not random, disconnected events. Rather, they are

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a part of His coming. The creation groans and travails, the nations rage, the kingdoms are moved,

the departure in the church, and all of this is a part of the coming of Jesus Christ and brings Him.

Second, we see from this illustration that Christ is always coming, that all throughout history He is coming. Many months before a woman gives birth to a child she begins to experience contractions and her body begins to produce the signs of childbirth. That was true way back when Jerusalem fell, and really all throughout history: Jesus is coming. As we have seen in an earlier message, He came in Bethlehem. He came at

the coming messages we want to look at some of these signs more closely. We can categorize the signs of the coming of Jesus Christ into three main groups. First there are the signs that take place in the creation, in nature, natural catastrophes. Jesus mentions them here in verse 7: famines and pestilences and earthquakes. Later in the chapter, in verse 29, He talks about an intensity of these signs that take place in creation, with the darkening of the sun and signs in the heaven, and the stars falling from the sky and the powers of heaven being shaken. These signs in the creation are a constant reminder to us of the judgment of God and the coming of Jesus Christ.

Then there are the signs in history and the history of the nations. In verses 6 and 7, Jesus mentions wars and rumors of wars. He tells us that as long as these wars continue, the end is not yet. So, through history we see these wars, but we see them as signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, persisting until very close to the end, when the kingdoms of this world will come together. They will be unified again under one kingdom and one head: Antichrist. Revelation talks about this when it speaks in Revelation 20 of Gog and Magog coming together against the holy city, the church of God. As believers with discernment, we can observe in

politics and the history of the nations and wars these signs that remind us that Jesus is coming.

Signs in the third category take place in the sphere of the church, and we see here that the signs are connected to and serve the church and the work of the church in the preaching of the gospel. In verse 14, for example, there is the sign of the preaching of the gospel. This gospel must be preached in all the world. This is why there are still wars between the nations, so that the gospel can be preached. In verse 12 there is the great falling away. This will come through false teachers that will rise in the church and false christs. The wickedness of the world will spill over into the church. Or you see the sign of great tribulation. Here is the ungodly world persecuting the church and the people of God especially during the reign of the Antichrist.

So you have these signs that take place in these three different spheres: the creation, the nations, and in the church. All of these signs will culminate in one great sign at the end of time, which is the sign of the Son of man, in verse 30, when Jesus will come on the clouds of heaven with His holy angels.

For the remainder of this message I want to talk about the character of these signs as that

expired, verse 7-9 says, "Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle.... And they went up on the breadth of the earth, and compassed the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city."

The restraint of Satan during the millennium makes it impossible for him to deceive the nations. This restraint is not a complete restraint. Still Satan works during this millennium with temptation and persecution and false teachings and other ways to deceive the people of God. He goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. But there is one thing that he truly wants to do, which is his main desire, which he cannot do—he cannot deceive the nations. That means that he cannot hold the nations under the darkness of unbelief. During the time before this binding, the Old Testament period, all the nations except Israel were, so to speak, under the rule of Satan. He blinded the nations. God's special and saving revelation came only to Israel. The nations were deceived.

But now, during the binding of Satan, the gospel goes to these nations. During these thousand years, Satan cannot combine the nations of the earth under one political power that opposes

the cause of God in Christ. It is only at the end of the thousand years (v. 8), that he gathers all the nations together. This restraint is placed on him during the thousand years.

So, the question is: when is Satan bound? The answer is: now, in the present, during the entire New Testament age from the ascension of Christ into heaven until shortly before His return. This is what takes place. Satan is unable to prevail because he cannot get the nations together as a unified force. Instead, as we look at history, there is constant warfare, the nations cannot get along. It is not until the very end that they will come together under the kingdom of Antichrist against the church and the people of God. This is the deceiving of the nations. Satan is bound for the duration of the New Testament age so that the gospel of Jesus Christ can go forth victoriously to all the nations. They are not under the deceit of Satan.

Now, think of a couple of passages in the New Testament. In Matthew 16, Jesus says, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In Matthew 28, when He gives the Great Commission, Jesus says, "Go ye into all the world," and in connection with that, He speaks of His role: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.... I am

with you always.” During this period, Satan is bound so that the gospel may have free course and so that Satan may not bring the nations together against the cause of Jesus Christ.

We have to look at this not only in the context of Revelation, but more broadly in Scripture. Is there any indication in the rest of Scripture, now specially in the New Testament, about the timing of the binding of Satan? The answer is: Yes, there is. It is connected to the cross of Jesus Christ, His resurrection, His ascension, and the gospel going forth to the Gentiles. I want to make reference to three different passages in the gospel. In Matthew 12, Jesus is accused by the Jewish leaders of casting out devils in the name of the devil. Jesus responds in Matthew 12:28, 29 in this way: “If I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you. Or else how can one enter into a strong man’s house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil the house.” The word there used for “binding the strong man” (and the strong man here is a figure or a symbol of Satan) is the same word that is used in Revelation 20. Jesus is basically saying that the power by which He cast out the devils is not the power of Satan, but a power that is against Satan and that binds Satan. This is what Jesus is doing in His ministry.

Now, turn to Luke 10. The disciples here are sent out—the seventy—by Jesus. We read in verse 17 that they returned with astonishment, with joy: the “seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.” Then Jesus answers them in verse 18: “He said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” That is not to be taken literally, but it is a figure of Satan’s power being dealt a crushing blow and cast out from heaven and from his position of power over the nations. That fits with the mission preaching of the apostles.

There is one more passage in the gospels that is also parallel, and that helps us to see this, and that is in John 12. There are some Gentiles, some Greeks, who come to Philip and say, “Sir, we would see Jesus.” Philip communicates this to Jesus, and Jesus answers this way, in verses 31 and 32, in connection with the gospel going to the Gentiles, the Greeks. He says: “Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out [that’s Satan]. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.” What is important here is that in verse 31 Jesus says, “the prince of this world [will] be cast out.” He will be cast out now, as Jesus goes to the cross, is buried, rises from the dead, and ascends into heaven. As He is lifted up on the cross

are a biblical type of what will happen at the end of the world. They are the first fulfillment of Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 24. But there is a second and future fulfillment at the end of the world.

We should understand that biblical prophecy is often given this way. Think, for example, of the promise that God gave to Abraham in the covenant. He promised Abraham the land on which he walked, the land of Canaan; He promised him a seed, that is, Isaac, who would be his son; and He promised, of Abraham, to make a great nation, that was the nation of Israel. But those three promises are only typical in their fulfillment to Abraham and in the Old Testament. They point ahead to something far greater. The promise of the land points to the promise of heaven. Canaan was a type of heaven. The seed, Isaac, points ahead to Christ who is *the* Seed. And the nation of Israel points ahead to the body of believers, the full body of all the children of Abraham who are children not by birth but by faith in Jesus Christ.

That is the way to understand Jesus’ prophecies here in Matthew 24 and 25. They are not exhaustively fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem, but this is only a type of the final destruction that is to come. So it helps us to understand what

will happen in the last days.

Perhaps you say, “I don’t know much about the history of the destruction of Jerusalem.” The main things that you need to know are told here by Jesus. There was a rejection of Christ and a falling away. There were false teachers who were against Christ. There was a tribulation that came under Roman tyranny. There was the setting up, in the temple in Jerusalem, of an idol. And then there was the final destruction of the city of Jerusalem. All representative of what would take place at the end of the world.

By setting before us these multiple fulfillments of this prophecy, Jesus is teaching us that in every generation, in the current generation as well as all through history, believers should be watching and ready. He does not say to His disciples, “Well, the end of the world is thousands of years away so you don’t need to worry about it,” but “Now are the end times. The spirit of Antichrist is always at work, and always there is false teaching and the risk of persecution and so many other things for which you need to watch as God’s people.”

Before we talk about verse 8, which deals with the character of these signs, I want quickly to identify the signs so that you will understand where we are going in this series of messages. In

and, in fact, there are no signs. We need simply to be ready for some sudden rapture. The postmillennial view of Jesus' return says that there is before us in history an earthly golden age of gospel influence and that gradually the world will become a better and better place morally and spiritually, and only at the very end of this very long period of time will we see, perhaps, some of these signs of Jesus' coming. Their teaching is not to look for signs of the coming of Jesus Christ but, rather, to look for signs that the world is improving.

Over against these denials, we have the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 24 that prior to His coming at the end of the world, He will send signs: events in time and history that will be observable, that will be experienced, and that true believers with discernment will understand to be the signs that we are coming closer and closer to the day of Jesus' return.

To see this, let us look at Matthew 24. We begin with the question of the disciples in verse 3. It is toward the end of Jesus' ministry—the last week of His earthly life, and the disciples sense this. So, in verse 3, they

ask Him a question. This question has two parts. In the first part of this question, they ask Jesus: "Tell us, when shall these things be?"

*This subject is not
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This follows Jesus' teaching in verse 2 concerning the destruction of Jerusalem. They are asking, "When shall this be?" But then there is another part in the question, and that is: "What shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?" This two-part question shows the insight of the disciples. First, they see a connection between the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world. They realize, in the second place, that the coming of Jesus Christ will be the end of the world, and they expect that there will be signs of both of these things.

In these two chapters (Matt. 24 and 25), Jesus answers the question of the disciples. He answers both parts of their question. He does not give two separate answers but instead He blends His answers. He sees the same thing as the disciples do, that there is a connection between the fall of Jerusalem and His final coming. The connection is this, that the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the things that happened in connection with the fall of Jerusalem,

and in His ascension, He will draw all men. People from all the nations of the earth, will be drawn by the gospel to Jesus Christ.

So, that is the way to understand the binding of Satan and what takes place during this period of time.

Then, in Revelation 20, we have in verses 4-6 the millennium from the point of view of heaven—what happens in heaven during this thousand years, this New Testament age. Let me read verse 4: "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, 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." This fits perfectly with what we have already said. While Satan is unable to deceive the nations, Christ and the saints rule from heaven. Why do I say from heaven? Because there is nothing in the verse here to indicate that this rule is an earthly rule. Instead, these are souls, souls of those who have been beheaded, that is, people who have been killed. These are not headless bodies but these are souls that have been separated from their

bodies. What is being described here is the intermediate state of the souls of believers. The soul of the believer at the moment of his death is immediately given life. Verses 5 and 6 speak of the first resurrection: "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." The first resurrection is a resurrection in the new life that our souls receive at the moment of death. These souls, the souls of those who have died as believers, in their intermediate state live and reign with Christ for a thousand years. They are given life, the life of Jesus Christ in their soul. They are conscious in the presence of Christ, and they reign with Christ. Note there: they reign *with* Christ. Christ is reigning in the present, during this thousand years. His kingdom is in the present and believers, in their souls, are given a place of rule with Him.

What happens to the rest? Verse 5 says, "The rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished." And these do not participate in the first resurrection. That is, unbelievers who die in their sin and unbelief are not given this place of glory and this place of rule.

What an encouragement this is to the church militant, the

church here on earth. Here is the church triumphant. Satan cannot deceive the nations. There is still a lot that he can do. One of those things is his persecution. Saints are beheaded as a result of that persecution. They die for the cause of Christ. Satan may destroy this body, and here is the encouragement, but in doing that, he only becomes the instrument to bring these saints into a greater glory and God's truth goes on, the gospel goes forth victorious to the nations. Luther says, "The body they may kill, but God's truth abideth still."

So we have in the millennium of Revelation 20 the present, spiritual rule of King Jesus from heaven by His Spirit and Word throughout all of the New Testament age and the reigning of His saints with Him. This is the victory of the white horse of Revelation.

What a comforting truth that is for believers.

The book of Revelation, I said, is written to persecuted Christians in the midst of a godless culture. What are you going to tell these people? Are you going to give them something abstract and some distant event about some future Jewish kingdom? Are you going to tell them that the world is getting better and better? No, this is what you will tell them. You will tell them that Jesus is King; that

He is building His church; that the gates of hell will not prevail against it; that the gospel and the truth will stand; that the next great event in history is the return of Jesus Christ to conquer and destroy the devil and those who serve him; and to make all things new. Then you will tell the Christians who face death and persecution about the glory of their souls at the moment of death. Not only can Satan not triumph over the gospel and the church, but he cannot destroy you in killing you. At the moment of death the souls of believers go and live in the victory and are given life with Jesus Christ.

In my temptations and in my persecutions and your temptations and your persecutions as a Christian, this is what you want to hear. That is the beautiful truth of the millennium. That is Christ's message for the church here on earth.

Let us pray.

Father, we thank Thee for this beautiful and encouraging truth that Jesus is King today; that Satan's power is limited; that the gospel goes forth victoriously; and that even though Satan may have the power to persecute and to take away our life, still our souls, at the moment of death, are given an everlasting life and a place of exaltation with Jesus Christ. We thank Thee, for Jesus' sake. Amen.

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Signs of Jesus' Coming
Rev. Rodney Kley

Dear Radio Friends,

Please read Matthew 24:1-8. We are interested today, especially in that last verse: "All these are the beginning of sorrows." In future messages we hope to come back to some of the earlier verses.

A few weeks back, we began a series of messages on the Bible's teaching concerning the last days. To help us avoid confusion and the false teaching that surrounds this subject, I am beginning this series with three messages that set forth three main biblical truths that we must have clearly in our minds if we are to understand the Bible's teaching on the last days. The first of these is that there is only one future, visible coming of Jesus Christ, which will be the end of the world. In our second message we saw that the kingdom of Jesus Christ is not future and earthly, but that the millennium of Revelation 20 refers to the present spiritual rule of Jesus Christ from heaven and the triumph of the gospel in the earth.

Today, in this third message, we want to look at the Bible's teaching that there are

visible and recognizable signs of the coming of Jesus Christ and the end of the world. We will look at that generally today. Then, in the coming messages we will begin to look at the different specific signs.

This is an extremely important topic because here the Bible's teaching on the end times becomes very practical. This subject is not a speculative armchair study that is abstract and mostly irrelevant for Christians. Rather, the signs of Jesus Christ's coming are sent by Him to prepare us for the day of His return, and He calls us to watch and be ready. Those who teach a future millennium basically deny that there are signs of the coming of Jesus Christ, or at least say that these are not relevant or important for Christians today because we will not see them. The premillennialist, who teaches that Jesus will come in a secret rapture and take all believers to heaven, says that the tribulation and the other signs take place mostly after believers have been caught up into heaven. So, they say, we don't need to watch for signs of the coming of Jesus Christ,