

The Kingdom of God vs The Millennium

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As we all know, we're here keeping the Feast of Tabernacles, picturing the wonderful period of the millennium. God the Father and Jesus Christ will come down to earth and hopefully we will have made it into the Kingdom of God as Firstfruits, serving with Him as kings and priests. It's a very wonderful time to picture. The millennium is this wonderful physical utopia where all the major problems that we see in today's world will not exist for a 1000-year period. If you look at God's Holy Day plan in general, one of the ways I like to refer to it is like a road map. A road map that leads the way for how God's plan for salvation for mankind plays out. The spring Holy Days refer to the plan of salvation for the Firstfruits and the fall Holy Days point to the plan of salvation for the rest of mankind. The destination on that road map is the Kingdom of God. The reason I point that out is, I think it's important for us to realize as church members that the millennium that we're here to picture is this wonderful period in the future that we have to look forward to. It's a very wonderful thing, but it's not the destination. The destination is the Kingdom of God.

The reason I point that out is because all of my life growing up in the church, I have seen what you might say is a confusion of blurring of the lines between what the "millennium" is and what the "Kingdom of God" is. If you have a Facebook account like I do, you're probably connected with a lot of people in the various churches of God organizations and you'll see a lot of memes put up this time of year—looking forward to the Feast and such—and see a picture posted of a lion, a lamb, and a child together which is a wonderful picture of the millennium, but what does the caption say? Kingdom of God; so, we've blurred the lines between the millennium and the Kingdom of God. One of the things we need to realize is, the millennium is a wonderful picture that we are commanded to be here to look forward to. It's an important part of God's plan but it's a physical concept. What is it? It's physical human beings living on a physical planet, experiencing a very wonderful, physical utopia. But the Kingdom of God—what Christ's gospel was about—that's a spiritual concept. That is something that physical human beings can't be a part of. It's very much about God beings in the spirit realm and it's very important that we understand those differences. What we are here picturing is a wonderful part of the plan, it's a very necessary thing that we are commanded to take a week to picture and look forward to, but it is not the destination. The destination is the Kingdom of God.

What we're going to do today, is to understand the line between these two and get a clearer picture between the Kingdom of God and the millennium. They are not synonymous; the millennium is an important part of the picture of that road map that leads ultimately to the Kingdom of God. If you would like a title for this sermon, it's:

The Kingdom of God vs The Millennium

We're going to understand the distinctions between them. Often around this time of year, church of God members commenting or putting memes on Facebook, looking forward to the Feast of Tabernacles that pictures the Kingdom of God. Actually, it doesn't, it pictures the millennium. The Kingdom of God is a spiritual concept that human beings are not a part of. Let's notice that directly from scripture in 1 Corinthians 15. We're going to read it right off the page that physical human beings are not part of the Kingdom of God.

1 Corinthians 15:50 *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption.* (NKJV)

There you have it, right off the page. Flesh and blood human beings—not a part of the Kingdom of God. To fully understand the context of what he's saying, we can't misunderstand if we just read the next several verses, it's very clear what Paul is getting at.

51) Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—

52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.

54) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (NKJV)

It's very, very clear when you read those next several verses what Paul is talking about. He's talking about the resurrection to eternal life, he's talking about being made a God being and that's when you inherit the Kingdom of God. It's a spiritual concept. What we're going to understand is, if you look through the New Testament, what was Christ's gospel about? The good news of the Kingdom of God. We're going to cover as we go through this sermon, times when the word "kingdom" is used in the physical concept of how we often refer to it in our world. If you have a king and he's ruling over a nation, territory or people, that is referred to as his kingdom and that is a valid use of the word. But it's important to understand that when Christ came preaching the good news of the Kingdom of God, He is not referring to a physical planet with physical human beings enjoying a wonderful physical utopia. That's not what all these parables are about, it's not what the focus was—He's looking beyond all of that and looking to being born into God's family as God beings—that's the Kingdom of God He is referring to. It's important we understand that distinction.

To further understand this, turn to John 3, Christ Himself is clarifying this same point.

John 3:1 *There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.*

2) *This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."*

3) *Jesus answered and said to him, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."*

4) *Nicodemus said to Him, "How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born?" (NKJV)*

You can see that Nicodemus is confused by the statement. If you notice Christ's answer, one of the keys to understanding what He is getting at, He clarifies three different times. He states it three different ways but is getting at the same concept every time. If you put them all together, it makes it very clear what He's trying to say.

5) *Jesus answered, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. (NKJV)*

Sometimes this gets confused and people think He's just talking about conversion here. You'll hear in the Protestant world today people refer to "born again" Christians. They aren't referring to someone being brought into God's family; they are referring to someone being baptized and receiving the Holy Spirit. Notice that two more times He gets the same concept and if we put it all together, it's very obvious what He's saying.

6) *That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (NKJV)*

In other words, if you have a fleshly birth, you are composed of flesh. If you have a spirit birth, you are composed of spirit. It makes it very clear. People look at born of the water like, is He talking about baptism there? Baptism wouldn't be compared to being born of the flesh, would it? Think about it, if a woman is pregnant and has a baby, that baby is encased in fluid inside her womb. When the baby is about to come out what is one of the signs of that? We refer to it as "her water broke". The fluid starts coming out with the birth. These are direct parallels. Now Christ is going to say it one more time and make it even clearer. Verse 8.

8) *The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (NKJV)*

Notice He is not saying the Spirit comes and goes and you see the fruits of that. He's saying so is everyone—the people can do that; the people come and go and you don't see them. He said the same thing three times. He has just worded it differently. The reason I point this out is, as you know it's common in the Protestant world to refer to a "born again" Christian and what they are referring to is someone who received the Holy Spirit. This was an idea introduced into the church of God back when I was attending Ambassador College.

I attended Ambassador College from 1988 to 1992 and that was right around the time they were introducing a number of changes. During my senior year in college, I was in Big Sandy and we had a guest speaker who came from Pasadena and was a well-known figure in Worldwide. I'm going to avoid names but I'm sure if I said the name, most of you who had been around in the Worldwide days would immediately recognize it and you'll probably still figure it out from the description I give. This individual came as a guest lecturer in my senior Bible class and you might say he was considered Worldwide's expert on Greek. As a result of that he had a way of bluffing people into heretical conclusions by claiming his knowledge of Greek. He put across that he understands the language and you don't and since he's the expert, you have to accept his conclusions. A lot of times what would happen was, he would put up a doctrine like the trinity where you didn't need to be an expert in Greek if you would just do your homework and look at the English and realize there's a big stack of scriptures that violated and contradicted the conclusion that he was trying to sell you on. You didn't need to be an expert in all the nuances of Greek.

He's guest lecturing and covering these verses. Several raised their hands and asked about verse 8 and wasn't that clear? His explanation for it he told us, was that was referring to the fruits of the Holy Spirit. You can't see the Holy Spirit but you can see the fruits in a person's life. That's not what it says. If you read verse 8 it says, *so is everyone*. The people are like that—the people can come and go and you can't see them. That's a way to decipher that. If you're being buffaloed with someone's expertise on Greek or Hebrew—(I'm not saying it's not important to look into the language, you'll hear in my sermons, I quote regularly from the Lexicons and dig into what the words actually mean)—but having gone through that experience of someone who was supposedly fluent in Greek, teaching us very heretical conclusions, one of the things I learned was, make sure you do your homework. Sometimes if you're just good at English and do your homework you can see the obvious red flags and realize, you may not know all the nuances of Greek but this is wrong because it contradicts too many scriptures.

Notice we've seen twice where the Bible directly tells us, the Kingdom of God—it's about Christ's gospel—is a spiritual concept that is made up of spirit beings. It's not a physical planet with physical human beings, enjoying a wonderful, physical utopia and it's important that we get that distinction.

There's one other thing I'd like to clarify in terms of the language. As I mentioned earlier, in our world today we often use the term "kingdom" to refer to a physical king who is ruling over a nation or area. We refer to the area and the people he's ruling over as his kingdom and that is a valid use of the term. The reason I want to clarify this is because we also think in terms of the millennium with the Father and Christ who come down and rule over the physical planet. If we successfully make it into the Kingdom of God, we are kings and priests ruling with them. So yes, you have kings ruling over a kingdom in that sense but let's make sure we understand the difference between that and what Christ is talking about in His gospel. Turn to Revelation 11 because this is a verse, very often talked about at this time of year, but what is stated is the Kingdom of God on earth.

While there may be an application of that language that is accurate, let's make sure we don't confuse that with what Christ's gospel was about.

Revelation 11:15 *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"* (NKJV)

So yes, it does refer to the kingdoms—the rulership—of this world have now been transferred and God the Father and Jesus Christ are going to come down with us and take over all that—there is an aspect of kings over a kingdom in that sense—but a different concept than what Christ's gospel is referring to.

Let me take a side tangent on this verse. I have to plead guilty myself the majority of my life, reading over this verse. I would read over this verse and the only individual I saw in this verse was Christ. I honestly didn't pay attention to the wording. It says, our Lord and of His Christ. Our Lord has to be somebody different than Christ. Our Lord has to be God the Father is we're referring to *our Lord and His Christ*. To clarify that you just read the next two verses.

16) And the twenty-four elders who sat before God on their thrones fell on their faces and worshiped God,

17) saying: "We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, The One who is and who was and who is to come, Because You have taken Your great power and reigned. (NKJV)

When you take some of the titles of God and do a Bible search program, which I did, and follow those titles of God throughout the verses, I found they didn't match what I had been taught from childhood that Christ was the God of the Old Testament. It didn't match my Bible. As I started biting this off, I would take the different titles and then do a word search and look up every verse in the Bible where the title was used to start clarifying the context. If you take the word "Almighty" and follow that through the Bible, you'll find that is *God the Father*. If you take, *He who was and is and is to come*, that's *God the Father*. You're going to see that being referred to as *He who sits on the throne* in Revelation and you'll see examples in Revelation where Christ comes up to the throne and takes the scroll out of the hand of, *He who sits on the throne*. So, *He who sits on the throne* has to be the Father for Christ to take the scroll out of His hand. So that's who we're referring to here. I just wanted to clarify that there are uses of the term "kingdom" in the sense of how we use it in our physical world today.

The Bible does use that term and there are some figurative references *in the Kingdom of God*. If you look at the term of how *Kingdom of God* is used in the Bible, it is exclusively a New Testament term. I'm not saying the Old Testament doesn't refer to the spiritual Kingdom of God, there are references there. I'm saying if you look at the words "Kingdom of God" and type that into a Bible search program, you're only going to get hits that come up in the New Testament. I did this with the New King James translation of the Bible. The "Kingdom of God" if you do a search with that, it's going to

only come up in the New Testament, 70 times. There's another parallel term exclusive to the book of Matthew, it's the "Kingdom of heaven" and it will come up 32 times. If you compare Matthew's use of Kingdom of heaven with Mark, Luke, and John, you'll see when he says Kingdom of heaven, it's the same concept. He's just using a different term. You'll see in the other gospels, basically the same type of account, the same story going on. Matthew is just using a different term but it's the same reference. It's the same meaning. If you start looking at all those terms, you'll start seeing, very consistently, this referring to what Christ talked about in His gospel; *the good news of the coming Kingdom of God*. Which again is a spiritual concept, not a physical concept.

To understand the differences of this, let's look at an overview of the millennium that we are here to picture. It's a wonderful thing to look forward to. I'm not in any way disparaging it. We are commanded to take a week to look forward to it and to have great joy when looking forward to this time. It's an important part of God's plan. I am saying let's understand as we do that, it's not the destination, it's a stop on the road map on the way, ultimately to the destination. The destination is the spiritual Kingdom of God. First let's turn to Revelation 20 and I want you to notice the timing here. The first thing we're going to cover is the millennium is temporary. It is specifically, exactly 1000 years. The Kingdom of God is eternal—lasts forever. That is our first distinction. We're going to see in the timeline in Revelation 20 it starts with telling us what Atonement pictures, we see the Feast of Tabernacles and then we see a reference to the 8th day. It's all laid out in sequential order.

Revelation 20:1 *Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand.
2) He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years; (NKJV)*

Notice as we keep reading these next several verses that figure of 1000 years just keeps coming up again and again; we can't miss it. It's exactly 1000 years, it's temporary. We see what happens before it and we see what happens after it.

3) and he cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal on him, so that he should deceive the nations no more till the thousand years were finished. But after these things he must be released for a little while. (NKJV)

Satan gets released after that. As I mentioned last year, if you read Matthew 25 and how the judgment takes place, for the rest of mankind, what is the criteria?

*When I was naked you clothed Me, when I was hungry you fed Me,
when I was sick you took care of Me.*

Don't those circumstances have to exist on a wide scale for that to even be relevant? So obviously Satan is going to stir up a lot of what we know today after the millennium. It's a temporary stop on the picture.

4) *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

5) *But the rest of the dead did not live again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.*

6) *Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years. (NKJV)*

Notice this 1000-year period keeps getting mentioned again and again. It's temporary, it has a specific period of time, it has a beginning and an end.

7) *Now when the thousand years have expired, Satan will be released from his prison*

8) *and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. (NKJV)*

You can read the book of Ezekiel for a lot more detailed account of this. You see a very ugly, brutal war that takes place. As I mentioned last year at the Feast, if you read Matthew 25 and the criteria that Christ is using to judge the rest of mankind, there has to be a lot of suffering issues that take place because, what is the criteria based upon? How you dealt with people who were suffering need. Well, they have to be suffering need for that to be relevant. It would be kind of stupid if He's saying, *when I was naked, you clothed Me, when I was hungry, you fed Me.* "What are you talking about Christ? We haven't had those circumstances." That wouldn't make any sense. Obviously, those circumstances exist. What I want you to see is, if this wonderful picture of the millennium that we are going to look at is a 1000 year "stop" on the road map—on the way to get there, it's an important piece of the picture—it's not the eternal Kingdom of God.

Now let's just take a quick look at some of the aspect of the wonderful picture we are here to look forward to. It's a fantastic picture—it's fun to talk about and to look forward to of how wonderful the millennial environment is going to be. Let's go to Isaiah 2 and we'll look at a brief overview of some of the major points here. Very common Feast of Tabernacles scriptures here.

Isaiah 2:1 *The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.*

2) *Now it shall come to pass in the latter days That the mountain of the LORD's house Shall be established on the top of the mountains, And shall be exalted above the hills; And all nations shall flow to it.*

3) *Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, And we*

shall walk in His paths.” For out of Zion shall go forth the law, And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

4) He shall judge between the nations, And rebuke many people; They shall beat their swords into plowshares, And their spears into pruning hooks; Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, Neither shall they learn war anymore. (NKJV)

That is a fabulous picture to look forward to. If you turn on the news today, what do you typically see? There’s a war somewhere and you see all the brutal suffering and all the people affected by it. If they aren’t killed or injured by what’s happening, their lives are being interrupted, they are being displaced from all the chaos that is happening around them. It’s just fabulous to look forward to a world where people won’t have to deal with that and that kind of suffering goes away. That is an exciting thing to look forward to. But it gets even better than that. A lot of the suffering we have today is lack of resources. Lack of food, lack of basic necessities to take care of people’s needs and there are famines in other areas that cause lots of problems and lots of suffering in our world. In the millennium, this is a problem that is going to be addressed. Turn to Isaiah 25:6.

Isaiah 25:6 *And in this mountain The LORD of hosts will make for all people A feast of choice pieces, A feast of wines on the lees, Of fat things full of marrow, Of well-refined wines on the lees. (NKJV)*

Basically, there is an abundance of nice things. There will be no shortage of crops to feed everybody. No one will be going hungry because they are dealing with famine and there is no food to go around. Notice in Amos, a little more detailed picture of this.

Amos 9:13 *“Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “When the plowman shall overtake the reaper, And the treader of grapes him who sows seed; The mountains shall drip with sweet wine, And all the hills shall flow with it.*

14) I will bring back the captives of My people Israel; They shall build the waste cities and inhabit them; They shall plant vineyards and drink wine from them; They shall also make gardens and eat fruit from them.

15) I will plant them in their land, And no longer shall they be pulled up from the land I have given them,” Says the LORD your God. (NKJV)

You have a picture of abundant crops—everyone having plenty. Several years ago, I was looking into these scriptures and even though I grew up in a farming community in Alabama, I was never really involved in agriculture and ever since graduating from college I’ve lived in Dallas, Texas in a major metropolis area and worked in a corporate environment so not all that in touch with agriculture. Several years ago, I went to some good friends of mine who do farming for a living and I was asking, can you help me quantify what this verse is saying here? The plowmen coming over the reaper, in practical terms what does that mean? Can you help me get my head around that? As you might anticipate the answer had some qualifiers on it. They said, it depends on what crop you’re talking about and what part of the world you’re talking about but generally speaking what you are talking about is about twice your normal yield. In other

words, you are twice as productive in producing crops as you normally would be. So, this creates an environment where you aren't dealing with areas of the world where people are starving and you have famine and all the health effects of this—people fighting diseases due to lack of nutrition and all the suffering that comes about with that—that's just not happening. This is unheard of; it's a wonderful, utopian world. The reason for that is, the earth itself has been transformed into a Garden of Eden type of environment that can facilitate this type of crop growth and make everything positive. To notice this, turn to Isaiah 35:1.

Isaiah 35:1 *The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, And the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose;
2) It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, Even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, The excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, The excellency of our God. (NKJV)*

Continuing half way through verse 6).

*6) For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, And streams in the desert.
7) The parched ground shall become a pool, And the thirsty land springs of water; In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, There shall be grass with reeds and rushes. (NKJV)*

In other words, this is going to be a plentiful earth. Today we have vast areas of the Sahara Desert and Death Valley and other places that are just not friendly to live in at all. Lots of land that you can't fully use to grow crops or try to feed people. This is going to completely change. As I've covered at the Feast a few years ago, that's what *new heavens and new earth* is referring to. It's the replenished earth after the destruction of the Day of the Lord where you now have this Garden of Eden environment across the world. So now you have this environment where you can produce plenty of crops and everything is a positive environment for people to live in. To see a little more description of this, turn to Isaiah 41:18.

Isaiah 41:18 *I will open rivers in desolate heights, And fountains in the midst of the valleys; I will make the wilderness a pool of water, And the dry land springs of water.
19) I will plant in the wilderness the cedar and the acacia tree, The myrtle and the oil tree; I will set in the desert the cypress tree and the pine And the box tree together,
20) That they may see and know, And consider and understand together, That the hand of the LORD has done this, And the Holy One of Israel has created it. (NKJV)*

If you're familiar with cypress trees, they only grow in areas with lots of water and it's wet. If you have cypress trees growing in what used to be a desert, you've completely changed the topography now. The landscape is completely different, you have a totally different environment. That's why you have a situation where there is no shortage of

food. There is no shortage of resources for people because you have food coming out of your ears. Everybody has plenty to eat, they have all the nice things available to them, when you think about it, this is just an exciting time to look forward to. If you look at our world today, would you rather live in this or would you rather live in this picture. No question, 100% I would pick this wonderful utopia. That sounds fantastic. That's what we would all think. But it even gets better than that.

One of the things that Rick included in his announcements, are prayer requests for people who are suffering health problems. If you get his weekly updates, sometimes multiple times a week, you get descriptions of various health problems that people are suffering through. Having to endure through all the issues that it creates for them. This is a problem that is going to be resolved as well. Turn back to Isaiah 35:5.

Isaiah 35:5 *Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, And the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.*

6) Then the lame shall leap like a deer, And the tongue of the dumb sing. (NKJV)

Basically, we're talking about a world where you don't have cancer, you're not dealing with diabetes and heart disease and autoimmune disorders and all the other things that people have ongoing suffering issues with today. Imagine a world where you don't have those things. Even just the issues of aging. I'll pick on Jack here again. Right before the Feast, after the prayer request of them dealing with Covid, I reached out and asked how are you doing? He was joking and said, "This getting old is not what it's cracked up to be." The normal aging process, as you get older, you typically have more health issues. I was joking with people this Feast, when I was in my 40's traveling was fun and adventurous. Now that I'm getting older, it's not as much fun as it used to be when I got into my 50's. You get older and those things happen, because those are the physical limitations of this life. Imagine a world where you don't have those kinds of sufferings. Imagine a world where you aren't getting emails multiple times a week to pray for this person because here are all the horrible sufferings that they are dealing with. Please pray that they have the strength to get through all of this—you're not having to deal with that. That is a fantastic world to look forward to. You can see why we take a week to look forward to this and why we see it as a wonderful thing to look forward to.

One of the things I want you to see in this sermon is, I want you to remember that as wonderful as this picture is, it's not the destination. The ultimate destination we are looking forward to is the Kingdom of God; that's what Christ's gospel was about. As we look at this picture and look forward to this wonderful time in the future, but realize that is not the ultimate picture, not the ultimate destination of the map of where we are headed, it's a stop along the way. Let's continue to paint the picture for how wonderful this is. We haven't gotten all the details of how wonderful this picture of the millennium is. Even communication problems are going to go away.

Imagine today how much conflict and how many issues come about because of different languages, different cultures, people misunderstanding each other and that just

becoming an issue interacting with people. That's a problem that is going to be solved as well. Turn to Zephaniah 3:9.

Zephaniah 3:9 *For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language, That they all may call on the name of the LORD, To serve Him with one accord. (NKJV)*

So, you have an environment where you have no communication issues. Everyone speaks the same language, everyone is on the same page, they can easily communicate and work together with people. What you have here is the opposite of what takes place in Genesis at the Tower of Babel. At that time, as the story tells it—I'll summarize it and not turn there—God looks down and says,

“These people are going to destroy themselves too quickly. They're too bent on evil and we need to confuse the languages and slow down this process of their ability to destroy themselves.”

So, He winds up confusing the languages and scattering people in different areas so they can't work together as well. This is going to be the reverse. Instead of having all that, let's give them all one language so everyone speaks the same, everyone can work together and communicate and understand each other well. Imagine all the conflicts that that gets rid of and all the issues that will be solved. You can imagine why this is such an exciting thing to look forward to.

But it gets even better than that. Even the animals are going to be tame. Turn to Isaiah 11, a very familiar picture that we very much associate with the Feast of Tabernacles and this time of year.

Isaiah 11:6 *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, The leopard shall lie down with the young goat, The calf and the young lion and the fatling together; And a little child shall lead them.*

7) The cow and the bear shall graze; Their young ones shall lie down together; And the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

8) The nursing child shall play by the cobra's hole, And the weaned child shall put his hand in the viper's den.

9) They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea. (NKJV)

Imagine a world where you can have a grizzly bear as a pet. Or a Bengal tiger or a lion—beasts you would be afraid to approach today. You can actually play with them because they are all tame. You don't have to fear for your life, that they may attack you and try to have you for lunch. This is a completely different world, an exciting thing to look forward to. Also think about the image I just read. It's something we very often associate with the millennium, but often what do you see this time of year, particularly if you have a Facebook account with church of God members putting up memes—and I'm not criticizing people, I'm just saying let's think things through because I understand the zeal and excitement. We're looking forward to the Feast of Tabernacles, we're getting

excited for God's Holy Days and that is a wonderful thing, but often what do you see? It's a meme with a lion, a lamb and a child which is right out of this verse, it's looking forward to the millennium but what does the caption say? Kingdom of God; in our mind we're blurring the lines and associating the two together. Yes, you do have God the Father and Christ and the Firstfruits as kings, reigning over them—that's a kingdom in that sense—but if we confuse that with what Christ is talking about in His gospel, what we're doing—I'm going to get ahead of myself a little—we're essentially taking the gospel of the Kingdom of God and making it in our minds, the gospel of the millennium. We're thinking in terms of a physical picture and not the spiritual picture of what Christ was talking about. What we are picturing here is a wonderful time. We are commanded to do a week, to look forward to it, it's an important part of God's plan. It is a stop on the map on the way to the destination, it is not the destination. That's an important thing to understand.

Realize, as wonderful as this utopian setting is, we're still going to have some rebellion. We're still going to have human beings who are just boneheads and refuse to follow God and who do their own thing, even in the most perfect setting. To see that, turn to Zechariah 14:16. This is very clearly a millennial setting.

Zechariah 14:16 *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

17) And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain.

18) If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

19) This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (NKJV)

Here we are in a perfect utopia where everything is wonderful, Satan has been bound so they don't have his influence but you still have boneheads who say, no I am just not going to do it. I insist on doing my own thing. I'm too stubborn to comply. Even in a perfect setting where you have the most ideal circumstances that anyone could possibly have, you still have some rebellion because you have corruptible human beings. It's clear to understand that the millennium is a physical concept and as wonderful as it is, it's not worthy to be compared to the Kingdom of God because the Kingdom of God is a spiritual concept made up of spiritual beings. As we're going to see later, who are incorruptible and can't even be tempted to sin, when they become God beings. We're going to read that later directly out of the book of James. That's the huge difference here. To realize, that anything that is physical is inherently temporary and corruptible. Turn to Romans 7:14, we're going to hear the Apostle Paul talking about this struggle of being physical and corruptible.

Romans 7:14 *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.*

15) *For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do.*

16) *If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good.*

17) *But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.*

18) *For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.*

19) *For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice.*

20) *Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (NKJV)*

Obviously, Paul is referring to his personal life, which was obviously a setting where Satan was loose and he had that spiritual force he is having to fight against. This is not directly comparable to the millennium in an environment where there is no Satan but we already read in Zechariah 14 that even without Satan, you still have bone-headed human beings who are just going to insist on doing their own way because the physical is just corruptible. As I mentioned before, it's temporary and corruptible and inherently when you have people who are physical and corruptible, you have death. People are inherently going to die at some point. Turn to Hebrews 9; with physical life this is just part of the package.

Hebrews 9:27 *And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment ... (NKJV)*

So, you have to understand that as wonderful as the millennium is, it's not worthy to be compared to the Kingdom of God. It's physical, it's temporary, it's corruptible and realize as physical human beings, when we are in the flesh, the physical is just never satisfied. Our physical lusts, our physical desires, we can just never get enough; that's just inherent to who we are. The book of Ecclesiastes is a very good example of that.

Ecclesiastes 1:1 *The words of the Preacher, the son of David, king in Jerusalem.*

2) *Vanity of vanities," says the Preacher; "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."*

3) *What profit has a man from all his labor In which he toils under the sun?*

4) *One generation passes away, and another generation comes; But the earth abides forever.*

5) *The sun also rises, and the sun goes down, And hastens to the place where it arose.*

6) *The wind goes toward the south, And turns around to the north; The wind whirls about continually, And comes again on its circuit.*

7) *All the rivers run into the sea, Yet the sea is not full; To the place from which the rivers come, There they return again.*

8) *All things are full of labor; Man cannot express it. [Notice this last verse] The eye is not satisfied with seeing, Nor the ear filled with hearing. (NKJV)*

In other words, with physical human beings, we never get enough. No matter how much fun we've had or how many beautiful things we've seen or how much wonderful food we've had, don't we always want more later? We want something more exciting or more fun or something a little better—we never feel like I've seen everything, I've done everything I want to do, there's nothing else. No, we think now I want something better, something bigger, something fancier. Just like we're always upgrading our phones. I want the latest one with the newer bells and whistles and the fancier options. We always want something more because that is inherent to who we are as physical human beings.

Solomon's life was a very good example of this. As I'm sure you're familiar with the life of Solomon, God comes to him and says to ask for what you want and I'll give it to you. He makes a great request and says, "Grant me wisdom that I can be the ruler of Your people." God says, "OK I'll give you wisdom and I'm also going to give you great wealth—you'll have money coming out your ears," which he did. Unfortunately, in spite of all his wisdom he did something very foolish quite frankly. He looked at this and said, "I'm going to embrace folly and madness and try to hang onto my wisdom too. I'm going to play with fire and think I'm so smart I won't get burned." it didn't work out so well. What he tried to do was try to satisfy every desire he had. He realized that that really bit him in the long run. Turn to Ecclesiastes 2 and we'll read more about this, in verse 4.

Ecclesiastes 2:4 *I made my works great, I built myself houses, and planted myself vineyards.*

5) I made myself gardens and orchards, and I planted all kinds of fruit trees in them.

6) I made myself water pools from which to water the growing trees of the grove.

7) I acquired male and female servants, and had servants born in my house.

Yes, I had greater possessions of herds and flocks than all who were in Jerusalem before me.

8) I also gathered for myself silver and gold and the special treasures of kings and of the provinces. I acquired male and female singers, the delights of the sons of men, and musical instruments of all kinds.

9) So I became great and excelled more than all who were before me in Jerusalem. Also my wisdom remained with me.

10) Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor.

11) Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun. (NKJV)

Notice what he learned from it all. He said,

"I satisfied every physical desire I had, married every woman I thought was attractive, I got servants, I built palaces, I did all of this wonderful stuff and in the end, it was all vanity and didn't satisfy me."

What's he trying to do? He's trying to fill the physical up, he's trying to fully satisfy the physical and it doesn't work. That's why we need the spiritual. That's one of the things I wanted you to see here, is even when you think of the millennium, this wonderful physical environment where you can't get any better—you solve every physical problem, you make everything a wonderful utopia, you make the earth perfect, take away health problems and give people plenty of resources, it's still physical. It's still physical, temporary and corruptible. The Kingdom of God is spiritual, it's eternal and it's impervious to these problems. It's important to understand that as wonderful as the millennium is, it's not worthy to be compared with the Kingdom of God. That's just inherently the difference between the physical and the spiritual. To see this, turn back to 1 Corinthians 15 and we'll start a few verses earlier, verse 42. What we're going to see is a "compare and contrast" between the physical and the spiritual.

1 Corinthians 15:42 *So also is the resurrection of the dead. The body is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption.*

43) *It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.*

44) *It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.*

45) *And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.*

46) *However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual.*

47) *The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.*

48) *As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly.*

49) *And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. (NKJV)*

As we can see, the "comparing and contrasting" are telling us that the physical is just inherently inferior to the spiritual. That's why the answer to it all is being born into the Kingdom of God, because notice the next several verses.

50) *Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. (NKJV)*

Kingdom of God is a spiritual concept made of spiritual beings.

51) *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—*

52) *in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.*

53) *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.*

54) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (NKJV)

The whole solution to it all—that's why the destination of the road map is not the millennium, it's the Kingdom of God. That's the solution to everything, doing away with the physical and ultimately being born as spirit beings who have none of these problems, who are not corruptible, who are eternal and not inherently physically limited and temporary. The Kingdom of God is not about our physical abundance and blessings. Turn to Romans 14 to see this distinction that the Kingdom of God is about spiritual and not physical. To give you some context of what this is referring to, basically Paul is addressing a dispute between those who would eat meat and those who wouldn't eat meat and those who just wanted to eat vegetables. They are squabbling with each other about, "We're more righteous than you," "No we're more righteous than you about diets." and he's saying, forget all of this. Those are personal choices with diet that have nothing to do with your spiritual life. Notice in verse 15.

Romans 14:15 *Yet if your brother is grieved because of your food, you are no longer walking in love. Do not destroy with your food the one for whom Christ died.*

16) Therefore do not let your good be spoken of as evil;

17) for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (NKJV)

In other words, it's a spiritual concept and not about these physical things. If we look at the millennium, it's this wonderful, physical utopia with all these great physical blessings but let's not confuse that with what Christ's gospel was about—the Kingdom of God—they are separate concepts. As we mentioned throughout this sermon, the physical is inherently temporary and so is the millennium. What did we see when we read through Revelation 20, the figure of 1000 years mentioned again and again. We read what happens right before it, where Satan is bound, and we read what happens right after that when Satan is let back out again. So, this wonderful physical utopia gets interrupted; it's just a period of time. But the Kingdom of God is eternal and lasts forever. Turn to 2 Peter 1:10.

2 Peter 1:10 *Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;*

11) for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (NKJV)

It's everlasting, it's not a temporary 1000-year period; it's eternal and lasts forever. We see this again in Daniel 2, this is where it's going to break into a famous account. You're probably familiar with Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel coming and interpreting it for him. It's going to break into the end of the story in verse 44.

Daniel 2:44 *And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; (NKJV)*

We're not talking about a 1000-year period that's going to get interrupted by Satan's release and everything getting messed up, we're talking about something that will last forever.

44 continued) ... and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever. (NKJV)

In other words, it's not temporary it's permanent, it's eternal, there is no end to this. It's not a 1000-year period and then we let Satan out again and everything changes. This is an eternal concept that lasts forever, there is no end to this. As I mentioned before, the physical is not only temporary, it's corruptible. As we read in Zechariah 14, even with no Satan, even in a perfect environment where everything is as ideal as it possibly can be, you have bone-heads refusing to come to the Feast. Think about it, in your Christian life there are things you have to give up that are kind of painful. There are things you have to do that your human nature doesn't want to do but you know it's the right thing so you make yourself do it. Isn't coming to the Feast of Tabernacles kind of an easy thing? It's something you look forward to every year, you get to spend a week enjoying abundance and fellowshiping with friends, you have more income than what you normally have the rest of the year so you're experiencing a level of wealth that you don't experience throughout the rest of your life. I normally don't see people complaining about the burden of coming to the Feast of Tabernacles; it's one of the highlights of the year. Think about it, if you have people refusing to do the easy stuff, that kind of tells you where their head is at. You can see even in a perfect environment you have corruptible human beings who just insist on doing their own thing. But as spirit beings, born into the Kingdom of God, then we're incorruptible; we're impervious to that. Turn to James 1:13.

James 1:13 *Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone.*

14) But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed.

15) Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death. (NKJV)

As carnal, physical human beings, we are corruptible. We can be tempted and drawn into sin but God's nature is impervious to that. He isn't tempted by sin, that doesn't affect Him. When we're born into His family as God beings, we will have the same nature. The Kingdom of God is incorruptible. Once all the road map is fulfilled and we have fulfilled the Feast and the 8th day and all that is left is God beings who have been born into His Kingdom, then you have the perfect, incorruptible environment where everything is perfect and it lasts forever and is not temporary. As I've mentioned several times throughout this sermon, we have to remember as wonderful as the millennium is, it's not worthy to be compared with the Kingdom of God. I didn't originate that phrase; I stole it from the Apostle Paul so let's turn to Romans 8:18.

Romans 8:18 *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.*

19) *For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God.*

20) *For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope;*

21) *because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (NKJV)*

Obviously, when Paul is referring to the sufferings of this world, he is referring to the trials that we go through in this life dealing with a world where Satan is there. He's not specifically referring to the millennium obviously. He's also getting at the corruptibility of the physical world. It's not worthy to be compared to what God has in store for us ultimately in His Kingdom. We can say the same thing with the millennium itself. That's not what he is specifically addressing here but the concept applies because as wonderful as a physical environment it is to look forward to—understand I'm not regrid it at all, we're commanded to take this week to look forward and as we've covered today it's a fantastic picture to look forward to with great joy—but it's important to realize it is a stop along the road map to the ultimate destination, it is not the destination.

Now let me also talk briefly towards the end of this sermon, what I'm going to call an honest look at our history in the church of God. This is particularly if you're someone who came into the church in the old days of the Worldwide Church of God. Realize as I cover this, understand it is not my intention at all to put anyone down or degrade anyone or beat up on anyone because I was very much a part of this culture as well. I think it's important to understand our history so we can have a clear picture of yielding to what scripture tells us and understanding that in the past we got a few things wrong.

If we understand our history, it's understandable why you'll often see church of God members today, from the time the Feast of Tabernacles comes around say, I'm looking forward to the Feast of Tabernacles which pictures the Kingdom of God or the Kingdom of God on earth. They blur the lines between the Kingdom of God and the millennium. Let's understand why that is. If we look back at our history, if you experienced the Worldwide Church of God—please understand I'm not beating up on anybody, I'm just honestly, analytically looking at the picture—we had a television program at that time that was how we reached out to the world, preaching the gospel and what did we call it? We called it The World Tomorrow and how did we promote that program? “We're proclaiming the good news of the world tomorrow.” We had a magazine called The Good News. Our main source of preaching to the world was a magazine called The Plain Truth, there was also a magazine more geared to church members or people who were ready for stronger meat than just what The Plain Truth covered. It was called The Good News and if you read the full caption under Good News, it said The Good News of the Coming of the World Tomorrow.

How did we define this term World Tomorrow? You don't have to guess, we wrote a book about it, it was called The Wonderful World Tomorrow: What it Will be Like. On my bookshelf at home, I have the hardbound version of that book, it's 102 pages and if you look at that book, the first 100 pages of the 102 pages is an overview of all the problems of our world today and how all of these will be solved in the millennium. It covers a lot of the things I've talked about in this sermon about how wonderful the millennium is going to be and the wonderful pictures and it covers some of the same scriptures and concepts we've talked about today. But that was the whole focus of the book except the last two pages that briefly mentions the spiritual Kingdom of God. Think about that; if you're focused on or proclaiming the good news of *the world tomorrow* and that's your whole focus and we define *the world tomorrow* as the millennium—a physical utopia on a physical planet with physical human beings enjoying a temporary, wonderful environment—think about the term *good news*. That's a play on the term gospel because *gospel* means *good news*. If the focus of your message is *the good news of the world tomorrow* and your definition of *the world tomorrow* is *the millennium*, aren't you sort of focused on the gospel of the millennium and not the gospel of the Kingdom of God?

That's the important thing we need to realize—please understand I'm not trashing anyone in the history, I grew up in this culture as well and if you had asked me seven years ago who the God of the Old Testament was, I would have said it was Jesus Christ. So, understand we all learn and we all grow over time. When you realize what we understood before wasn't quite perfectly right, you learn and grow and you adjust. I'm not trashing anyone in the past, I'm saying let's understand our history and not confuse the two. When Christ came preaching, it wasn't the gospel of the millennium, He was coming to preach the Kingdom of God which is the spiritual concept that if we endure to the end successfully and we make it into the resurrection of eternal life, we will be born into the Kingdom of God and be God beings with Him. That is the ultimate picture, that is the destination that the Holy Days—that road map—leads us to, which is the Kingdom of God. The millennium is a wonderful “stop” along the way that is an important part of that picture but it's not the destination.

As we continue to keep this Feast, let's look forward to this wonderful time of the millennium—what the Feast pictures—and look forward to what God has in store for us with that, but let's not lose sight of the fact that the ultimate destination, where this road map leads to is the spiritual Kingdom of God.