

# ESCHATOLOGY: DOCTRINE OF LAST THINGS

## PART 15

### PREMILLENNIALISM AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD, PART 4

We've examined the historical Theocratic Kingdom of Israel for one reason: the Millennial Kingdom will resemble it in some ways. If this dispensation of grace is what dispensationalists say it is, that is, it is an intercalation [an intercalation means to insert something between fixed points in a calendar] or postponement in God's dealings with Israel, then it stands to reason that when the Millennial Kingdom is inaugurated, the Theocratic Kingdom is resuming and the new Kingdom will continue it in some form. We know that Israel will be the head nation both in terms of leadership and in terms of spirituality. We know there will be a Temple (Ezek. 40-48), there will be a priesthood from the line of Zadok who was David's faithful priest (Ezek. 40:46, 43:19, 44:15-16, 48:11) but this priesthood will be according to Melchizedek rather than according to Aaron, and there will be sacrifices in the Temple. It will be a time of prosperity for Israel who will have the land promises fulfilled. We know the King, the God-man, will sit on the Davidic throne in Jerusalem. We know the world will be governed as a theocracy.

Isaiah 2:2-4 <sup>2</sup>Now it will come about that In the last days The mountain of the house of the LORD Will be established as the chief of the mountains, And will be raised above the hills; And all the nations will stream to it. <sup>3</sup>And many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, To the house of the God of Jacob; That He may teach us concerning His ways And that we may walk in His paths." For the law will go forth from Zion And the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. <sup>4</sup>And He will judge between the nations, And will render decisions for many peoples; And they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, And never again will they learn war.

Ezekiel 44:15-16 <sup>15</sup>"But the Levitical priests, the sons of Zadok, who kept charge of My sanctuary when the sons of Israel went astray from Me, shall come near to Me to minister to Me; and they shall stand before Me to offer Me the fat and the blood," declares the Lord GOD. <sup>16</sup>"They shall enter My sanctuary; they shall come near to My table to minister to Me and keep My charge.

Hebrews 7:11-17 <sup>11</sup>Now if perfection was through the Levitical priesthood (for on the basis of it the people received the Law), what further need was there for another priest to arise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be designated according to the order of Aaron? <sup>12</sup>For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also. <sup>13</sup>For the one concerning whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no one has officiated at the altar. <sup>14</sup>For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. <sup>15</sup>And this is clearer still, if another priest arises according to the like-

ness of Melchizedek, <sup>16</sup>who has become such not on the basis of a law of physical requirement, but according to the power of an indestructible life. <sup>17</sup>For it is attested of Him, "YOU ARE A PRIEST FOREVER ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK."

Ezekiel 43:18–19 <sup>18</sup>And He said to me, "Son of man, thus says the Lord GOD, 'These are the statutes for the altar on the day it is built, to offer burnt offerings on it and to sprinkle blood on it. <sup>19</sup>'You shall give to the Levitical priests who are from the offspring of Zadok, who draw near to Me to minister to Me,' declares the Lord GOD, 'a young bull for a sin offering.

Zechariah 2:10–12 <sup>10</sup>"Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst," declares the LORD. <sup>11</sup>"Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. <sup>12</sup>"The LORD will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.

"[T]he world program as determined by God is consummated in the age to come, the present age being an intercalation—a period thrust in which is wholly unrelated to that which went before and to that which follows. The earthly story is taken up at the end of this age precisely where it was left off when, in fulfillment of Old Testament expectation, the kingdom was 'at hand' by the coming of the Messiah to Israel, and when the covenants and earthly glory of that people were pending. ... The law system is not introduced again at the beginning of the kingdom age; it is continued with certain additions directly from the Mosaic system with no reference to, or contributions from, this intercalation age." [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, p. 4:167].

Exactly what form these things will take is unknown. They do not represent a total return to the Mosaic Law, however, McClain seems to think it is a complete return. Chafer believes the Kingdom incorporates much of the Mosaic system but the Kingdom teaching is a system complete and perfect in itself. [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, p. 4:169]. There is no doubt it is a return to some sort of Law system but to say it is the Mosaic Law as McClain does is going too far because the Mosaic Law was abolished upon the death of Christ. Despite that, McClain says, "[I]t may be observed that, especially with the Amillennial school of eschatological opinion, there is a high reverence for the Mosaic law and insistence upon its application to the Church of the present age. Yet with curious inconsistency the same school is unalterably opposed to the idea of a coming kingdom of God on the earth within human history, when the great principles of the Mosaic code will be made the law of all nations, and enforced by immediate divine sanctions under the beneficent rule of God Himself in the Person of His incarnate Son, our Lord Jesus Christ." [Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom*, p. 90]. The Law code of the Kingdom will not be a return to the Mosaic Law but it will be a Jewish, legalistic Kingdom of some sort and it will certainly exhibit some characteristics of the dispensation of Law, yet it is a distinct dispensation in its own right. Some of the Mosaic Law will be retained in the new code and some will be modified through addition or

subtraction, and new laws will be instituted. As Chafer noted, it will have “certain additions” whatever they are and whatever form they take which we at this time do not know. McClain does make a good point concerning amillennialists trying to impose the Law in this age compared to their opposition to any thought of Law in the Kingdom. So many theologians who are not premillennialists scoff at the idea there is any sort of Law orientation in the Millennial Kingdom but they are very busy trying to impose the Law in the age of grace.

As always, grace will abound no matter what form the Kingdom takes; God has always been gracious in His relationship with mankind and He will always be gracious in that relationship. When theologians deny a literal Kingdom because it has Law aspects and is Jewish in nature, at least to some extent because Israel will be the preeminent nation in the world, they are ignoring and denying Scriptures that affirm this view. McClain believes it is an amillennial mindset that wants to impose the Mosaic Law on the world today but that is also, and probably even more predominantly, a particularly important part of postmillennialism which is desperately trying to force the world to become Christian. Yet, they forcefully argue against any such notion of Law in a literal Millennial Kingdom.

In this age, the Mosaic Law is completely done away and the Law of Christ which operates with a grace orientation is the standard operating procedure. “Thus it may be concluded that the written Law of Moses is not intended to be the rule of the believer’s life under grace. Yet, on the other hand, the abiding principles of the law which are adaptable to grace, are carried forward and restated under the teachings of grace, not as law, but reformed to the mold of infinite grace. ... [T]he intrinsic value of the ... law is preserved and reappears bearing the stamp of the new teachings of grace. ... Since both the Law of Moses and the teachings of grace are complete in themselves, neither one requires the addition of the other, and to combine them is to sacrifice all that is vital in each.” [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:243].

The doctrine that the Kingdom is here now and that we are to be about the business of building the Kingdom now leads to confusion because the Kingdom is not here now. A few weeks ago we noted that this theology can lead to the desire to impose the Mosaic Law into this dispensation thereby impose the Kingdom upon the world. We called that theonomy or Christian Reconstruction. What law will look like in the Kingdom can only properly be applied to that Kingdom when it comes into existence and it isn’t in existence yet; therefore, even if we knew what it is, it must not be imposed in this age. The Law of Moses has been abolished and whatever Kingdom law will be in effect is not to be applied to the dispensation of grace; they do not mix.

“The teachings of the kingdom have not been applied to men in all the ages; nay, more, they have not yet been applied to any man. Since they anticipate the binding of Satan, a purified earth, the restoration of Israel, and the personal reign of the King, they cannot be applied until God’s appointed time when these accompanying conditions

on the earth have been brought to pass. The kingdom laws will be addressed to Israel and beyond them to all the nations which will enter the kingdom. It will be the first and only universal reign of righteousness and peace in the history of the world. One *nation* was in view when the Law of Moses was in force in the earth; the *individual* is in view during this age of grace; and the whole *social order* of mankind will be in view when the kingdom is set up in the earth." [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, 4:207].

Peters understood the premillennial return of Christ was the event that was going to inaugurate the Millennial Kingdom which was itself to be a continuation of the historical Theocratic Kingdom of Israel. "The Theocracy, as once established, is only the earnest, or initiatory or introductory form, giving the grand outlines or *fundamental principles*, because it still lacked some features to perfect it, that God intended to develop afterward. Typical observances were to give place to the antitype; religious ceremonials were to be superseded by others. The King, too, was invisible; His majesty could not be revealed because a perfect Mediator was lacking—a satisfactory atonement of sin was wanting. But when the Redeemer appointed has come, when the atonement is made, when the Mediator is God manifested in humanity, *then provision* is made to insure, when the time arrives, *the visibility* of the Theocratic King Himself. Briefly, turn to the Theocracy as it existed, and then read what the Prophets declare of *this same Theocracy as it shall be manifested under the reign of the Messiah*, and it will be seen that, while *the fundamentals* which constitute it a Theocracy remain intact, yet *glorious additions* productive of happiness and blessing are incorporated with it at its future re-establishment." [George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, pp. 1:217-218, prop. 25, obs. 2].

"The restoration of the Theocracy is *the key note* of prophecy. ... The reader is exhorted to notice that, as the nature of the case absolutely demands, every prophet unites *the restoration of the Theocracy with the Jewish nation*." [George N. H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, p. 1:218, prop. 25, obs. 3].

It cannot be overemphasized just how important it is to understand God's Kingdom program. If the Kingdom program is not understood, then the Bible cannot properly be understood. This failure effects not only prophecy but every doctrinal area of God's program as revealed in the Word of God. "In view of the misunderstanding which obtains relative to the isolated and unrelated character of the present age, the strongest emphasis is demanded upon that truth. Let no would-be interpreter of the Sacred Text assume that this is a minor issue. On it hangs a right understanding of 'the law and the prophets,' as well as worthy comprehension of the precise nature of the divine purpose in the present age. Postmillennialism, amillennialism, post-tribulationalism, and all other unscriptural world-program systems are traced directly to this colossal blunder. More moderate terms might be employed of a doctrinal fallacy which left less destruction and wreckage in its path. Those who have embraced these distortions of truth are called upon, if candid, to face the fact that the Old Testament story runs directly into the kingdom age without the slightest recognition of the present age or its purpose, and

that the present age is, therefore, wholly dissociated from, and contributes nothing to, the Old Testament program. It should also be recognized that every Old Testament Scripture which declares anything respecting future events—and these are on the lips of every Old Testament prophet—demands, not this age, but the oncoming kingdom for its fulfillment. Admixtures and partial recognitions of the doctrinal distinction here set forth tend but little to the dissolution of the dire confusion which exists." [Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology*, p. 4:168]. It would be very helpful if more dispensationalists understood this and were as faithful as Dr. Chafer was to teach it.

Joshua was the mediatorial ruler appointed by God to follow Moses and He was filled with the spirit of wisdom (Dt. 34:9).

Deuteronomy 31:14, 23 <sup>14</sup>Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, the time for you to die is near; call Joshua, and present yourselves at the tent of meeting, that I may commission him." So Moses and Joshua went and presented themselves at the tent of meeting. ... <sup>23</sup>Then He commissioned Joshua the son of Nun, and said, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall bring the sons of Israel into the land which I swore to them, and I will be with you."

Joshua 1:5–9 <sup>5</sup>"No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. <sup>6</sup>"Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. <sup>7</sup>"Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. <sup>8</sup>"This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success. <sup>9</sup>"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Following Joshua, God's mediatorial rulers were the judges that God appointed.

Judges 2:16, 18 <sup>16</sup>Then the LORD raised up judges [שֹׁפְטִים] who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them. ... <sup>18</sup>When the LORD raised up judges for them, the LORD was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for the LORD was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.

Judges, שֹׁפְטִים, means to judge or to govern. It is often translated as "judge" but it is much broader in meaning than what we think of as a judge with authority limited to judicial activities. Its use in this book of the Bible encompasses all the facets of government: executive, legislative, and judicial. They were not simply the authorized officials who were responsible for adjudicating differences among the people or maintaining order; they

were specifically appointed by God. Their appointment was often characterized by the Spirit of the Lord coming upon them. "Three things should be noted about this coming of the Spirit upon the great leaders of the historical kingdom: first, it was not always related to high moral character; second, in certain cases its outstanding effects were seen chiefly in the realm of the purely physical; third, it had to do primarily with the regal functions of those who stood as mediators of the divine government of Israel." [Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*, p. 93]. The judges, God's designated representatives, were the method through which God directly ruled over His people. Eli, Samuel, and Samuel's sons were the last of the judges.

We should acknowledge the supernatural nature of the Theocratic Kingdom when it was in its infancy concerning the divine protection God gave the infant nation. This is not new but it began 3,000 years ago with Abraham. God's divine preservation of the nation Israel has been evident throughout history and it is still evident today. "It is surely true that conditions under the judges were far from ideal. Yet certain things should not be forgotten. In spite of six major military invasions of the land, long oppressions at the hand of victorious enemies, struggles between individual tribes, and serious civil war, the nation of Israel came through all these terrible dangers with a vigor and a consciousness of divinely ordained destiny unparalleled in recorded history. To those familiar with the international situation of those years, the wonder is that no one of the great world powers reduced the land of Canaan to total subjection, with a consequent destruction of the tiny nation which had as yet no strong centrally organized government. These facts alone point to something above and beyond the ordinary providential control of God; namely, to the existence of a supernaturally ordained and sustained Kingdom of God on earth, in which Israel was the favored nation." [Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*, p. 95].

The final mediatorial rulers God used to govern Israel were the kings. It is probably safe to say that God was not totally against the idea of ruling through a monarchy because He was going to allow that to happen and set up the guidelines for it to take place. It is also fair to say a monarchy wouldn't be the ideal program; it wasn't what God wanted for them. What the monarchy was not intended to be was a monarchy like that of any other nation in the world. Whether they had a ruling king or whether God was leading them, the rebellious nature of the people continually led them away from God as the period of the judges proved. Many theologians believe the rejection of God as their king to be replaced by human kings ended the Theocratic Kingdom, but that isn't so. God's intention was to rule through the kings as His viceregents just as ruled through the Patriarchs, Moses, Joshua, and the judges.

1 Samuel 8:7 <sup>7</sup>The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them.

God told Abraham he would be the father of many kings.

Genesis 35:11 <sup>11</sup>God also said to him, "I am God Almighty; Be fruitful and multiply; A nation and a company of nations shall come from you, And kings shall come forth from you.

God gave them commands for the operation of the monarchy as part of the Law.

Deuteronomy 17:14–20 <sup>14</sup>"When you enter the land which the LORD your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,' <sup>15</sup>you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman. <sup>16</sup>"Moreover, he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor shall he cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, since the LORD has said to you, 'You shall never again return that way.' <sup>17</sup>"He shall not multiply wives for himself, or else his heart will turn away; nor shall he greatly increase silver and gold for himself. <sup>18</sup>"Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. <sup>19</sup>"It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, <sup>20</sup>that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.

The king was supposed to be the man chosen by God and he was to occupy the throne of the Theocratic Kingdom. He was supposed to continually keep the word of God uppermost in his mind so that he would not think too highly of himself in comparison to his fellow Israelites. The Kingdom never belonged to the kings; it was always God's Theocratic Kingdom and they were ruling in His stead.

1 Chronicles 28:5 <sup>5</sup>"Of all my sons (for the LORD has given me many sons), He has chosen my son Solomon to sit on the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel.

2 Chronicles 9:8 <sup>8</sup>"Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you, setting you on His throne as king for the LORD your God; because your God loved Israel establishing them forever, therefore He made you king over them, to do justice and righteousness."

It is important to note the real reason the Israelite elders wanted a king.

1 Samuel 8:5, 19-20 <sup>5</sup>and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations." ... <sup>19</sup>Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us, <sup>20</sup>that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

One of the problems Israel had then and Israel has now is they have forgotten they were a nation specifically created by God to be a choice people serving Him. They still don't acknowledge that truth. They just want to be like every other nation in the world but they aren't. Most of them today are not godly people and today they just want to be like every other nation on earth—but they still aren't like everyone else. They want everyone to like them. They think if they just give up enough land and act peacefully enough, the world will like them and Muslims will like them and everyone will accept their right to exist. That's not going to happen until Christ returns. They are a God created people set apart for God.

The appointment of a king didn't change that; they still weren't like the other nations. They didn't choose their own king; God chose him. They were warned of the burdens they would bear to support a king and they ignored them. So, they got a king.

“[B]asic to Israel's troubles in the historical kingdom was her desire for a government *like all the nations*. The mention of a 'king' in the Biblical context has served to confuse the real issue. But the important point is that Israel was determined to have a government which would be similar to the other nations of the ancient world. She was not satisfied to continue under the system set up at Sinai, uniquely distinct from all other political forms, ancient or modern. She wanted to be in fashion politically.” [Alva J. McClain, *The Greatness of the Kingdom: An Inductive Study of the Kingdom of God*, p. 113].

In terms of Eschatology, the only point I'm making is the Theocratic Kingdom God installed with Israel was a continuation of God's practice of ruling through mediators He appointed to represent Him to the world, in this case, through the nation of Israel. What God started with the Patriarchs and with Moses, was not altered by the institution of the monarchy. The nation was still to operate under the commands of the Mosaic Covenant. This Kingdom, in some form, will continue after this dispensation with Christ as the King.

What the Kingdom is not going to be is some sort of perfected Christian church as we know it. The church began at Pentecost and it will end at the moment of the Rapture. The church, the bride of Christ, will have gone through the wedding ceremony and no one will be added to it. The church will be ruling and reigning with Christ in His kingdom, but we do not know what that will look like either. Old Testament believers and Tribulation believers are not and will not be part of the church, the Body of Christ.