Why Need There Be a Millennium? Part 1

By Charles Feinberg

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The study now is on the subject, “why need there be a millennium?” By Dr. Charles Lee Feinberg, Dean emeritus and professor of Old Testament at Talbot Theological Seminary in La Mirada, California. The subject then, “Why does there need to be a millennium?”

I'd like to direct your attention to the prophecy of Isaiah the 11th chapter and the first ten verses. We read here, "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: and the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’s den. 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. And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek” and his rest shall be glorious."

Poets and writers, authors through the centuries have written of a coming age of glory, a golden age. It is to be found, we're told, in practically every great literature of the world. It was in England the year before the Protestant Reformation began in Germany. It was in England in the year 1516 AD, Sir Thomas More was in that year the Sir Thomas More, M O R E, wrote a book and he called it Utopia, U T O P I A. That word has come into our English language now as a common word usually means a state where someone is daydreaming, or pipe dreaming, or living in an unreal world, an ideal world. The word utopia as the name of this book. Was chosen because the book described an ideal country, an ideal commonwealth. An ideal government that enjoyed perfection in politics, that would be something, in law, in economics, in social affairs, in all the spheres and areas of life. Now the question is the millennium, which is from two Latin words meaning a thousand years, is the Millennium just such a dream for those who want to escape the hard realities of this life? Is it a product of the theologians who have read it into the Bible through their own wishful thinking? Is it true here as in so many other cases in the world that the desire was father to the thought? Someone wanted something so badly that he practically thought it into existence. In fact there are some who find great deal of thought with anyone who believes in a millennium on earth. They say the trouble with you conservatives, with you Orthodox people, is that you want pie in the sky by and by. I'm sure you've heard that. It’s not a very kind thing but it's repeated. You want pie in the sky by and by. Well we can hear that just so long until. We confront them with a statement that truly explains and characterizes them. They truly want more and more chow here and now. And I've not heard any of them that actually denied it.
But this is not just a war of words. What does the scripture of God say? Well it may surprise some to know that when we speak of the millennium, we are referring to nothing other than the predicted Kingdom reign of the Lord Jesus Christ on earth. It may surprise some folk even more to know that along with the theme of the actual visible return of Christ to the earth, This is the greatest theme of old testament prophecy. that the son of David, the Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, the mighty one, the everlasting father, the mighty God, the prince of peace is going to return and have full sway over the kingdom of righteousness worldwide. I say that along with the truth of the return of Christ to Earth, This is the greatest theme of Old Testament prophecy. Many look at the Old Testament, the thirty nine books, and they say, "Well you can pretty well say since it's all before the coming of Christ the incarnation that much, if not practically all, of it has been fulfilled". There are some things to be fulfilled that are in the New Testament. Ah that is a wrong evaluation. One could scarcely be farther from the truth if he tried. There is a sense in which much of the Old Testaments is fulfilled, we realize that. more than thirty, almost three dozen prophecies were fulfilled concerning Messiah that are written in the Old Testament, About three dozen were fulfilled In the ministry, in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. And equally true sense, much of The Old Testament Is yet unfulfilled in an equally valid way. Much of the Old Testament I say is unfulfilled and lies yet before us, do we realize.

Why does there need to be a millennium? Because it is eminently marked. It is preeminently the time of fulfillment of the revealed purposes of God. It's a time of vindication. Some things have been said. Some things have been done. Certain actions and reactions have gone on in the world. And there has to be a finalizing. There has to be a settling of the scores. There has to be an evening of the balance in order for God's character, his purpose, his word to have its full weight.
Why does there need to be a millennium? For a number of reasons. There needs to be, there must be, in the very nature of scripture, there has to be a reign of Christ on earth because of David, the covenant with David. You say, "What does that have to do it?" Quite a bit, quite a bit. God made a solemn unconditional covenant with David. He didn't say, "If you do so and so, I will do so-and-so". Not at all he said, "I will do this, I will do that, I will do the other". Now if you or your children sin, there will be chastisement just as a faithful father would. God is a great disciplinarian. He never makes promises that makes sin a way of life, oh no. But God never said, "I'm going to break that promise of mine. I am going to let it go unfulfilled".

What is that covenant with David? Well in 2 Samuel 7 We read that when the time came in the reign of King David that he was dwelling in his own house, had built him a beautiful palace and he had rest from his enemies round about, you remember he was a great warrior king, and he was not on any campaign. The king thought So much about the beauty of his own house. And then he thought about the discrepancy, the completely different situation in which the ark of God was found. And so he called Nathan the prophet, that great man of God. He said, "I'm living in a house of Cedar, the ark of God dwells within curtains". And Nathan said to the king, "do all that's in my heart, The Lord is with you". He wanted, We just have a part of the conversation, in all probability, David had expressed to him his great desire and longing that God have a place where the Ark of God could be housed that would be somewhat in conformity with its tremendous worth and the visible place of God's worship on earth. Well Nathan was delighted he said," go do all this in my heart, The Lord is with thee". But after Nathan left David that night when he was thinking it's all over, God's Word came to him and said, "Nathan you have spoken too rapidly, to precipitously. You better go back and tell my servant David, "Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? I have not dwelt in any house since the day that
I bought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle”. He said no, you have been a man that's been in many campaigns, who shed much blood. Now you will not be allowed, you are not going to be allowed to build this house of mine.

But God is not going to allow himself to be any man's debtor. And so God says in verse ten, 2 Samuel 7:10 "Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime, and as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies". Now here is the climactic statement, moreover “the Lord telleth thee that he will make thee an house". You want to build me a house of visible materials? A house of timber, the cedar of Lebanon, and beautiful masonry, and beautiful architecture apartments? I'm not allowing you to do that but I'm going, out of my own heart, to build you a house. And he meant by that a ruling house, a dynasty just as we speak today and correctly, of the House of Windsor in England or in Europe or the House of Savoy, or the House of the Habsburgs, or the House of the Holohan Zollars. There is a true house of David. I'm going to tell you, and I'm telling you now, that the Lord's going to make you a house "When thy days are fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers". When you've died I'm going to set up thy seed that your descendants after you that shall proceed out of thy body, I will establish his kingdom. That house means a kingdom, there’s the proof. “He shall build an house for my name and I will establish the throne of his kingdom". He's talking about thrones and kingdom forever. Here is an everlasting kingdom. "I will be his father". Notice the intimacy, the tremendous nearness to the Davidic house. I will be his father and he shall be my son. If any of your descendants he says, "If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but my lovingkindness shall not depart from
him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom", the house is the kingdom, the dynasty. "Shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established forever." Notice in that verse you have house, kingdom, throne. There's no question about what God is promising, it's unmistakable. "According to all these words, and according to all this vision, so did Nathan speak unto David."

And you say, "My dear friend, that's in second Samuel seven. And you know the awful, awful sin of David in just a few chapters after this. In the 11th chapter of second Samuel the awful, awful sin of David. Well there He was a party to doing away with Uriah the Hittite, the husband of Bathsheba and was guilty of being an accomplice to his falling in battle before the enemy. How can you say that that has no bearing in this matter? Oh, it has bearing in God's dealing with David and with his descendants. But it doesn't mean that God says that covenant that I promised you out of my own faithfulness is a forgotten thing. Oh no. If you want to prove, if you want to see how important that covenant, how lasting, how enduring it is just read Psalm 89. Never read 2 Samuel 7 without reading the commentary in Psalm 89. It's a Maskil, in the heading that means an instructions Psalm of Ethan the Ezrahite. He says, "I will sing of the lovingkindness of the Lord forever: with my mouth while I make known thy faithfulness to all generations". Notice that word faithfulness all through this 89th Psalm. Go through it, it will delight your heart to realize the infinite faithfulness of God. I think of it so often. I never sign a letter to a believer without concluding it, “yours, in his faithfulness”.

Faithfulness to what? Well we'll see in a moment. Verse 2, "thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens". But faithfulness in what particular, in what relation? Verse 3, "I have made a covenant with my chosen". Which one? Abraham? Someone else? No, "I have sworn unto David my servant, thy seed will I establish forever", that's 2 Samuel 7, "and build up
thy throne to all generations”. Well is it all over? No, “thy faithfulness is going to be in the assembly of the holy ones”. He goes on and verse after verse, verse 8, "thy faithfulness." This verse is, this psalm if you will, is just shot through and through with the concept of the faithfulness of God. Look at Verse 19. Psalm 89 verse 19, "Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one, and sadist, I have laid help upon one that is mighty; I have exalted one chosen out of the people. I have found David my servant; with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not exact upon him: nor the son of the wickedness afflict him. And I will beat down his adversaries”, and so on. Verse 24, “But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him: and in my name shall his horn be exalted.” He goes on to talk about his lovingkindness in verse 28, "my covenant shall stand fast with him". His throne is going to be as the days of heaven. Now if his children do evil and break God's statute, verse 32," then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their security with stripes”. God is not going to be caught by surprise but, verse 33, "My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. My covenant", again, "My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Once have I sworn by my holiness". It's a marvel that he swore even once but because he could swear by no greater, he swore by his own holiness, "I will not lie unto David. His seed shall endure forever" and he talks about the faithful witness in the sky.

He keeps talking about that covenant. Time after time after time and then, He even mentions his ultimate faithfulness that will prevail over all things. Here it is that lovingkindness. "Lord, where are thy former lovingkindesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth? Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants”. Oh yes. God has not forgotten his covenant with David. And proof is Matthew 1:1. God will not allow you and me to get out of the first verse of
the first chapter of the first book of the New Testament, Matthew 1:1, without saying with a clap of thunder, I have not forgotten my covenant with David. And listen how it reads, "the book of the generation", that's the book of the genealogy, the book of the family tree, "of Jesus the Messiah, the Christ, the Son of David, the son of Abraham". Isn't that a colossal chronological mistake? David lived 1000 BC, Abraham lived 2000 BC. That's even more of a chronological change than to say that the now living president of the United States, the one in the White House, Was in his administration about A hundred years, or 200 years before, or even 500 years, before George Washington was ever born. Why you would say that's a tremendous mistake in chronology or in time. Well think of it as a thousand year span between Abraham and David and yet David's mentioned first. Why? Because the spirit of God will not let you and me get out of that verse before he says with a veritable Clap of thunder, "I have not forgotten and I never will forget my covenant which I have made with David". He is the son of David, the son of Abraham.

And Luke's Gospel tells us the same thing in Luke 1 Verse 32 and 33. It's the angel Gabriel speaking to the Virgin Mary telling her about her coming child that she's to be the Virgin Mother of the Messiah. Listen now, in Luke 1 Verse 32 and 33, we do well to begin with Verse 31, "and behold. The angel Gabriel", and he's not in the habit of lying to anyone, he is telling forth the truth of God. Says Gabriel to the Virgin Mary, "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David". There it is now the throne, not of Abraham, but the throne of his father David, “And he shall reign over the House of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom”, there is a house of Jacob, there is a house of David, and there is a kingdom “and of his kingdom there shall be no end”. And there is a throne of his father David.
Is the son of David, I want to ask you, is the son of David reigning on David's throne? No, he's on the father's throne. How do you know? Revelation 3:21, “to the overcomer”, and the one who overcomes is by faith to the overcomer, “I will grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne”. Psalm 110:1, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” He he's not seated on his own throne now at all. Scripture tells us that in Old or New Testament he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Well you say, "That's the only throne that Jesus is ever going to have". That's not the way the Bible tells it. Matthew 25:31 we read when the Son of Man comes in his glory, He's going to come with his angels, His holy angels. And then he will sit on the throne of his glory. He's not seated on his own, He's seated on the father's throne.

But suppose Christ never sits as the son of David on that throne. What becomes of God's promise to David? God has more to lose by it than David. God could never then be considered the moral governor of the universe. Think of that great man of God who is our spiritual father, Abraham. He hadn't had any of written scripture. That was written later by Moses through the Spirit of God. And yet in Genesis 18:25, as he's praying for the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zaboiim he says, "Lord shall not the judge of all the earth do right? “God is going to do right. He cannot default on his promises. And that promise, that covenant to David, has to be fulfilled If God is to be true to his word. And in the millennium it will be. We're told that on every package sent out by a certain printer in a large eastern city is a very impressive trademark. What is it? It's a simple circle but in it is the printer's name and these words, "I never disappoint". Every promise the Lord has ever made, friend, every single promise the Lord has
ever made can well bark, can very well be marked by that same statement. It can bear that trademark, "I never disappoint".

There's got to be a millennium because of David. There has to be a millennium because the believers today, the promise to the Saints. Well what's God promised? God has promised that if we believers suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with him. Second Timothy 2:11-13, If we deny him he will deny us but he if we are unbelieving he's going to be keeping his promise. He will not default on that. He abides faithful. He cannot deny himself. In Revelation 2:26-27, we're to sit with him on his throne. Revelation 20 verse 6, they sit upon the throne with Christ with their thrones and rein on the earth. And the reigning, mark you, is on Earth there too. Now would you say that believers are reigning with Christ today on Earth? Believers in Russia, in the iron curtain countries? The bamboo Curtain countries? Other countries with their curtains? No, not in Russia, not in Germany, not in China, not in North Korea, not in North Vietnam. Believers are not reigning in the earth and you know they're not. Are they not rather suffering in the earth? Well "where they suffer", Paul says in 2 Timothy 2:11-13, "where they suffer, there they must reign". And there has to be a reign of Christ for that. It has to be realized, that promise.

Then there is yet another reason why there must be a millennium, the reign of Christ on earth. Because of the nations. not only because of David, the promise to him the covenant with him, not only because of the promise to believers today but the nations, the hope of the nations of the earth. Well what did God ever promise to the nations? Well if we read through the Bible carefully friends, you'll see that the Bible predicts in unmistakable terms for this weary, worn, struggling Earth a glorious time of rest. A time of peace. A time of justice. A time of prosperity. A time when oppression will be a thing of the past. Would you say that the nations are enjoying this now or are they not at wit's end? Are they not in a most perplexing situation? Are they not in
an oppressive state where tensions built up almost beyond bearing? And yet, listen, Isaiah 2:4 says, "nation shall not lift up sword against nation", kingdom against kingdom, “neither shall they learn war any more”. The desire of all nations is going to come. And we read in Zechariah Chapter 8 verse 23, "In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you". Has that looked as though that's happened? Only in the kingdom of Christ can that be true. God is going to have a summit conference. Yes. And there will be disarmament. Read it, my dear friend. It’s in Isaiah Chapter 2 Verses 2 to 4 that has not yet come gloriously to pass but it will, mark you, it will come to pass in that time that we call the kingdom of Messiah. Called and well known popularly as the millennium, the thousand year reign of our Lord Jesus Christ on earth.