

THE TRIUMPHANT KINGDOM

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SCRIPTURE: Revelation 5:9-13

And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth. And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne, and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever.

The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

There is no point whatsoever in talking about the kingdom of God on earth if it is never to be realized -- if it is always in the future, or just around the corner. We have talked in previous sermons about the hope and the promise of the kingdom. In this sermon, which will be the last one which we deal specifically with the kingdom, we wish to discuss the triumphant kingdom.

We believe that God is going to redeem the world -- not write it off as a bad investment, or abandon it, or destroy it. The redemption of the world, and of the men who have made it their home, has been God's purpose since the time of the fall -- and perhaps even before that. God's purposes cannot be frustrated, neither can they be brought to naught. What he has declared, that will he do. The mission of his Son, Jesus Christ, which was foretold by the prophets of earliest times, was to make possible such a redemption of man and of the world, that this world could be the eternal dwelling place of the triumphant kingdom after being cleansed and sanctified and restored to its pristine and idyllic beauty and peace.

The triumphant kingdom is the only thing which gives point or hope or purpose to the Christian life. If we are alleventually to be defeated by death, and if then in finality the world is to vanish in a puff of smoke, then the sooner we set off a string of hydrogen bombs and blow everything to eternity, the better. But God has better things in store for those who will love and serve him, and obey the laws of his kingdom on earth as they are obeyed in heaven. He promises them a triumphant and everlasting kingdom.

Over what will this kingdom be finally triumphant and victorious? First, it will be triumphant over death -- over the grave, or shool (often inaccurately translated hell) which is the temporary abode of the dead while they await the resurrection. Jesus, by his own resurrection from the dead, made possible this triumph. Through the power of his resurrection all men who ever lived shall some day come forth from the grave in new, immortal, indestructible bodies. In the vision which John saw of Jesus on the Isle of Patmos, Jesus declared, "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

In the first resurrection, which will be simultaneous with Christ's second advent to the world in glory, those who are Christ's at his coming will come forth. With them will come forth also the heathen nations, and they who died without a knowledge of th

law, but who have heard and received the gospel and accepted the redemption of Christ in the spirit world. God has not forgotten, nor is he going to condemn unjustly the who died in ignorance of Christ; but according to the teaching of I Peter 3:19,20 and I Peter 4:6, they will receive the preaching of the gospel in the prison house, in the spirit world, and have opportunity to accept the redemption of Christ without which no man can be saved.

In further preparation for the final triumphant kingdom, the first resurrection will be followed by the millennial reign of Christ over his saints -- both those who came forth in the first resurrection, and those righteous people living on earth at his coming, whose bodies will be changed into immortality without going through the processes of death and decay. Satan will be bound during those thousand years, but the kingdom will still not be completely triumphant during the millennial reign, because the wicked and rebellious who remain on earth at the second coming of Christ and the establishment of his kingdom, will still live on earth during the thousand year reign. Meanwhile, the wicked dead are still unredeemed and unresurrected, awaiting the day of judgment in the prison house.

At the end of the millennial reign of Christ will come the second resurrection -- the resurrection of the wicked who have been held in the prison house during the thousand years for further correction and instruction and perhaps punishment. Then the redemptive power of Christ will have brought all men from the grave for judgment. If they are deemed worthy to live eternally in a triumphant kingdom, they will be given that lesser degree of glory which they are worthy and capable of receiving. If they are still not repentant or worthy after all the long-suffering of God, and after all the many opportunities extended, they must be banished from God's kingdom to a kingdom which they have chosen by their own free will, and by their own rebellious act.

At the end of the thousand years, and the second resurrection, the final and complete triumph of the kingdom will be established by the events described in the 20th chapter of Revelation. When Satan is released for a "little season" he will gather the wicked together to battle, and come up against the saints and kingdom of God. But the miraculous and fiery power of God will put all wickedness to flight in that day to cast those who are still wicked and rebellious into the lake of fire, which is the second death. There they will be forever alive in the flesh, but forever separated from God because they would not obey him or accept his redemption. There the burning fires of conscience and the cankering thoughts of what they might have been had they been willing to accept the mercies of their Creator and Redeemer, will torment them through an endless eternity.

Briefly we have described how Christ and his kingdom will triumph over death and the grave, and over Satan and his wickedness. Through Christ and the power of his resurrection, man will also triumph over self. Body and spirit will be reunited in perfect unity -- will work together as a harmonious whole. There will be no more death, or sorrow, or crying, or pain, or disease, or crippling disability. There will be no enmity between body and spirit, or between spirit and body. The body will be the perfect instrument and obedient servant of the spirit. Body and spirit, inseparably connected, will receive a fullness of joy.

The final triumph of Christ's kingdom will be a triumph over the kingdoms, rulers and principalities of this world. All political divisions and sub-divisions will be erased, and the world will become one under the dominion of Jesus Christ. The kingdoms of this world will become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever.

Of all men who ever lived, Jesus is the only personality worthy to receive such triumphant dominion. Never has any other man lived who could be trusted with power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing. Inevitably, sooner or later, the kings and rulers of earthly kingdoms are corrupted by these things and their subjects with them. Such corruption always brings downfall and ruin. But Christ's triumphant kingdom will never fall. Of the increase of his government in the triumphant kingdom there shall be no end, for it will be a government by one who is worthy to rule, over those who have demonstrated their worthiness to be ruled over by him who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who shall reign over his triumphant kingdom forever and ever.