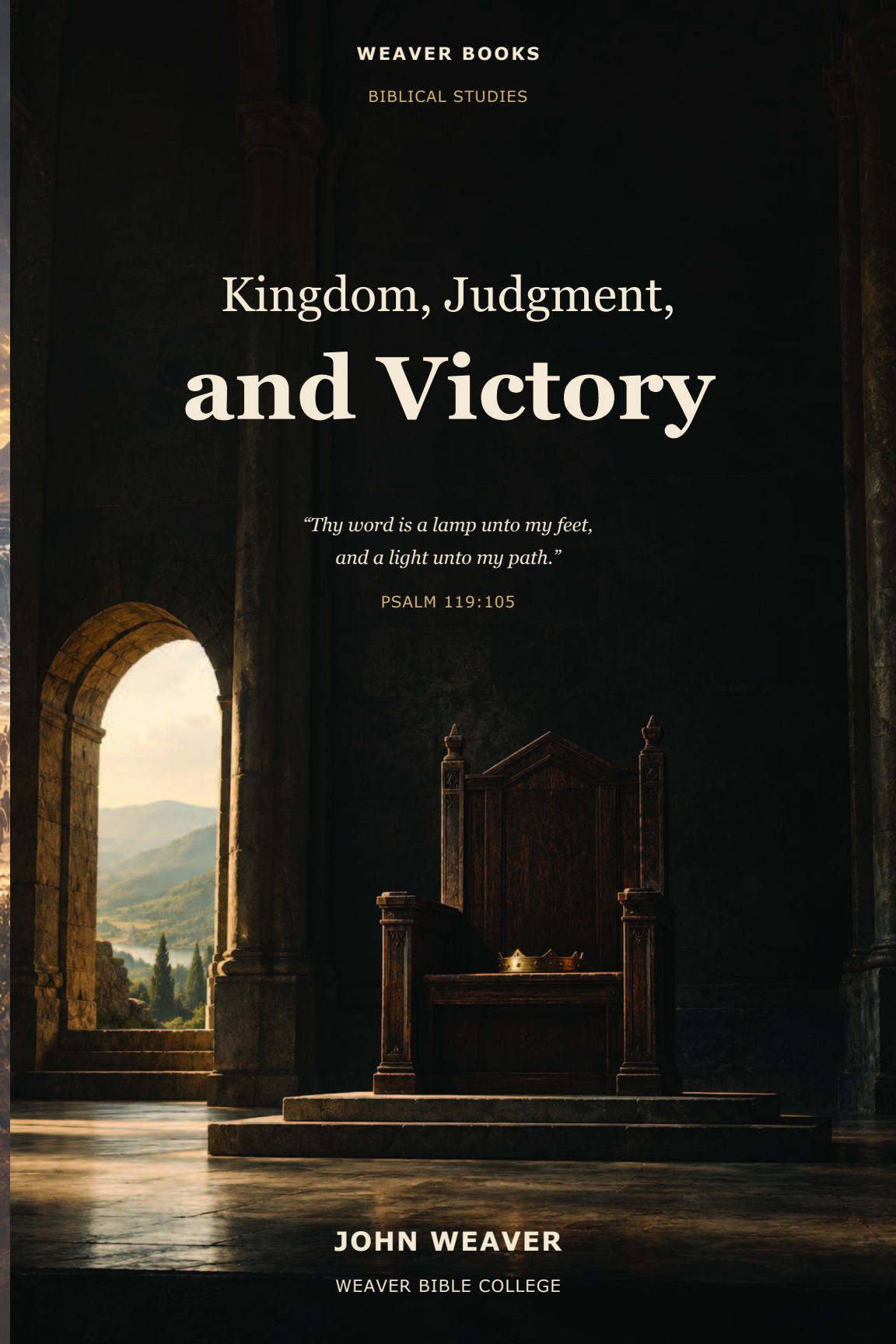
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Kingdom, Judgment, and Victory

"Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path."

PSALM 119:105



JOHN WEAVER

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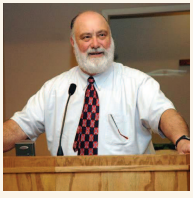
The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

PSALM 103:19

Christ's reign supplies the foundation for Christian hope. John Weaver considers judgment, victory, resurrection, and the expectation of God's kingdom through a group of related messages. These sermons connect the present authority of Christ with the future confidence of His people, asking what faithful service looks like in light of His rule.

"The only way that you can worship God and rule with God is by obeying God."

JOHN WEAVER



John Weaver

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CHAPTER 1

Conversion of Gen. Richard Ewell

Introduction and Scripture Reading

Open your Bibles to John 3 and 1 Timothy 1. The message is on the conversion of General Richard Stoddard Ewell. I will tell you about General Ewell in just a minute, but first I want to set the stage theologically before giving it to you historically.

The Necessity of the New Birth

There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. The same came to Jesus by night and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God, for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

That which is born of the flesh is flesh. That which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I say unto thee, You must be born again. The wind bloweth whither it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth. So is every one that is born of the Spirit.

In 1 Timothy 1:16, the Apostle makes this statement: Howbeit for this cause I obtain mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. The Apostle Paul makes a bold and very broad statement. He states that his life—that is, his conversion—was a pattern for all those who would hereafter believe. All who are converted are converted as the Apostle Paul was converted.

That does not mean that we have the same degree of conviction or intensity that he had in all things, but the pattern is basically the same. We find this truth in John chapter 3, where Jesus Christ told Nicodemus, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, you must be born again.” Nicodemus was a ruler of the Jews and a Pharisee, yet Christ used a very simple truth to confound him: a man must be born again. The word again comes from the Greek word anothen, which literally means “from above.” What Jesus Christ said was, “Verily I say unto you, you must be born from above.”

Three Illustrations of Salvation as God's Work

In other words, unless you are birthed from above, our Lord says, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. There can be absolutely no doubt that salvation is of the Lord, for two reasons. First, Scripture expressly declares it. Jonah 2:9 says, “Salvation is of the Lord.” Second, there are only three illustrations of salvation in the Bible, and each demonstrates conclusively that salvation is the work of God.

The first illustration is in John 3, where Jesus Christ said, “...verily, verily, I say unto you, that a man must be born again, or born from above, before he can enter or see the kingdom of God.” Here, then, is the illustration of a birth. How many of you had anything to do with your physical birth? No one—not one. You did not decide one day, “I want to be born.” You had nothing to do with

your physical birth. You were born at the pleasure of your parents; it was their choice, their decision, and theirs alone.

The same is true of our spiritual birth. James chapter 1, verse 18, says, "…of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." Of his own will. It is God who sovereignly births us. The second illustration is that of creation. In 2 Corinthians 5:17, he said, "…if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," or literally, a new creation. All things are passed away. All things are become new.

How many of you had anything to do with the first creation? The answer is not one. You were not even around. The Bible says that God spoke the world into existence. If you will study the book of 2 Corinthians chapter 2, you will remember that the Bible tells us that God spoke, and He has shined the light of Jesus Christ into our hearts. Just as we had nothing to do with the first creation, we have nothing to do with the second creation. It is a work of God.

The third illustration is found in Ephesians 2 and verse 1: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." How many dead men have you ever known to raise themselves from the dead? The answer is none. You do not pass a cemetery and hear someone saying, "Up foot, wiggle toe, move arm." If a dead man is raised, there must be a power outside of him exerted upon him, or else he will never be raised, because he is dead.

Here are three illustrations: birth, creation, and resurrection. Each of these three illustrations demonstrates conclusively that salvation is the work of God alone.

Look back in John chapter 3, if you would please, and verse 3: "Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, or born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Then, in verse 7: "Marvel not that I said unto you, Ye must be born again." Literally, what Christ is doing in John chapter 3 is giving us an analogy that we can understand. He is telling us that spiritual life is like physical life in one sense of the word.

Regeneration vs. Conversion

Before you were born physically, there was a conception, the implantation of life. There was maturation: you matured in your mother's womb. Finally, after that maturation was completed, you were born; you came forth. The same thing is true when you think of spiritual life. Physically, conception is the implantation of life. When a woman conceives, she does not necessarily know at that time that there is life in her. All the ladies who have had children, can you pinpoint the exact second that life began? You cannot. That life was there, but later there was maturation, followed by signs and evidences that you indeed were expecting. Finally, that child was born.

The same thing is true in the spiritual realm. How do we know that there is a real child born? You might say, “That is very simple. I can see.” No, wait a minute. There is such a thing as a stillbirth. Some individuals have been born dead. What are the two evidences that there has been a real, living child? The very first thing the child does when he is born is cry. The second thing is that the child immediately desires milk.

Remember that, because I want to show it spiritually. Let us return to the physical picture. Here is conception. What is conception? It is the implantation of life. Here is regeneration. What is regeneration? Regeneration is the supernatural work of God whereby He implants life into the soul. God begets us, regenerates us, and places that life in us. But just as a woman can be pregnant and not know it at that moment, an individual can likewise be regenerated and not know it at that moment.

How can that be? After the implantation of life, there is maturation. We begin to mature, and that life begins to show signs and evidences. We call it conviction and musings. In other words, we start thinking about things in a different light. We think about our sins differently. Before, our sins never bothered us; now they bother us. Before, we had no conscience about certain things, but now we have conscience about them. We can no longer do them. There is a desire to hear the truth, and then there is actually the birth. The birth is equal to conversion.

When the regenerated, convicted sinner repents of his sin, comes to faith in Christ, and trusts only in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, that is conversion. He bows to the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Regeneration and conversion are two different things; they are not identical. Regeneration is the implantation of divine life into the soul, and conversion is the fruit and evidence of regeneration. Regeneration assures conversion. Once regeneration has taken place, conversion is absolutely certain.

There is an interesting thing about John chapter 3. Although our Lord tells us we must be born from above, nowhere does the Bible tell us how to be born from above. Is that not interesting?

Billy Graham, a few years ago, came out with a book entitled How to Be Born Again. I do not know where he got his information from. He certainly did not get it from the Bible, because the Bible does not tell you how to be born again. The Bible does tell you how to be converted. They are two different things. The reason the Bible does not tell you how to be born again is because being born from above is a supernatural work of God. It is something that only God can do. Man cannot do it.

Let me give you a perfect illustration. You remember John chapter 11. Lazarus dies, and our Lord went there with His disciples. He told them, “We go to awake Lazarus from his sleep.” They said, “Lord, if he is sleeping, he is doing well.” Our Lord said, “Look, let me tell you very plainly, he is dead.” When they got there, he had already been dead four days.

Mary came out to meet the Lord and said, “Lord, had you been here, my brother had not died.” Then Martha came out and said the same thing. He said, “Even now, if you believe, you will see that he is going to live. I am the resurrection,” said the Lord. “I just walked into town and he shall live.” Our Lord walked up to the tomb where Lazarus was buried and said, “Lazarus, come forth.” What does the Bible tell us? He that was bound with grave clothes came forth.

Now, let me ask you a question. Did God give Lazarus life inside that tomb, which enabled him to walk out? Or did He only give him life after he got up and walked out? You know the answer. If God had not done something for Lazarus inside that tomb, he would never

have walked out. What God did inside that tomb was regeneration. It was the implantation of divine life. When he got up and walked out of the tomb, that was conversion. That is the evidence that God has indeed given us life. Regeneration implants life, and conversion is the full manifestation, fruition, and maturation of that life.

In Galatians chapter 4, beginning with verse 4, notice this. I asked you earlier, What were the two signs that a real live baby had been born? The first thing the baby does is cry, and the second thing he does is desire milk. Look in Galatians 4, beginning with verse 4.

Evidences of Spiritual Birth

But when the fullness of time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. What does a regenerated, converted man begin to do? He begins to cry and to pray to his heavenly Father, the One who has regenerated him.

As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word that you may grow thereby. How can you tell that someone is a real, genuine child of God? The answer is very simple. He immediately begins to pray, and secondly, he immediately desires to hear and to be taught the Word of God. He wants those two things more than anything else in the world. Just like a physical birth, so it is in the spiritual birth.

The Conversion of General Richard Ewell

General Richard Ewell came to Christ by the grace of God, just like anyone else. Although we cannot see his regeneration—we do not know when, where, or how God implanted life into him—we can see his conversion and its fruits, and judge whether the man was genuinely converted according to the Word of God. General Richard Stoddard Ewell of the Confederate Armies was affectionately known as Old Baldy.

General Ewell's Early Life and Character

General Ewell was born on February 8, 1817, to Thomas and Elizabeth Stoddard Ewell. He was raised in a devout Episcopalian household. His mother had the greatest influence upon his life. When General Ewell went away to West Point to study at the military academy, he maintained his religious training and conviction. However, military life proved the undoing of much of his training.

After leaving West Point, Ewell still maintained a belief in God, but organized religion no longer played an important part in his life. In fact, at that time, he did not even own a Bible. The natural skepticism of youth, the wicked influence of military life, and the lack of organized religion on the frontier posts destroyed what little remained of his religious training.

Itinerant missionaries or preachers also greatly decayed his religious training. There were many missionaries who worked with the Indians at that time, and some were unethical in and of themselves. They were not converted individuals. Many simply took government pay and pay from other churches to go out there and literally party, because Ewell reported that wife-beating, fornication, theft, and cheating were prevalent among them.

When his brother William expressed his desire to become a missionary, General Ewell wrote, “I was quite shocked at the thought of Williams turning missionary. I have seen so much injury done to Indians here by them that I am rather skeptical as to their utility. Some of the greatest scamps we have are missionaries.” Here was a man raised with religion, although he was not a Christian, who recognized that some of the greatest scamps, as he called them, were those claiming to be Christians.

General Ewell was what you and I would call today a cusser. He cussed; he was a profane man. Oftentimes, when he drilled his soldiers, he cussed them very lustily. And yet he loved the men, and they respected him, understanding that he did indeed love them.

One of the funniest things I read about General Ewell occurred during one of the early skirmishes of the War of Northern Aggression. Ewell was in bed when he was awakened at night by gunfire. He jumped up in the middle of the night, in his nightgown,

and ran to where some of his men, the Warrenton Rifles, had formed, because Union Cavalry had come through the little town shooting it up. Still in his nightgown, he reformed and regrouped the Warrenton Rifles. Soon the horses were coming up the road. It was dark, and they could not see the men. Ewell stepped down and said, "Halt, who goes there?" The answer came back, "Cavalry." General Ewell replied, "What cavalry?" At that, the Union officer leading the cavalry shot a pistol, grazing Ewell in the shoulder near the neck. By then his men fired back such a deadly fire that the federal officers decided they had better go another way around Fairfax Courthouse, and they went away.

A young recruit, noticing Ewell's injury, asked if he was hurt much. The general replied, "It's none of your blank business. Take your place in the ranks." Brigadier General Samuel Ferguson later laughed when he heard the story. "I've often pictured to myself the old soldier mad as a hornet, being taken by surprise, his command thrown in confusion, and smarting, too, with a wound, having a raw recruit interrupt him with his sympathy." He chuckled, but the soldier did not find it amusing.

Repeating Ewell's response to Laconicus a short time later, the offended man remarked, "You know, sir, that was not only impolite, but very profane." Pastor William E. Dame said of Ewell's speech, "He did not confine himself to the dull neutralities of undecorated speech." Private George Terry Eagleston put it more bluntly: "General Ewell was at this time the most violently and elaborately profane man I have ever known. Elaborately, I say, because his profanity did not consist of single or even double oaths, but was ingeniously wrought into whole sentences. It was profanity which might be parsed and seemed the result of careful study and long practice."

So he was a cusser for sure. Colonel Thomas Munford agreed, saying that Ewell was a hard old customer and could swear, when he chose to exercise that faculty, in a style that defied description. He spared no one when he was cross, but was nobly generous at other times.

Ewell was indeed an anomaly. Although he was not a Christian, he had been raised in a religious home. At one of his posts of duty, a

young girl had been captured by the Apaches. General Ewell went out and confronted them, and without having a battle, literally talked them into surrendering the young girl into his care and custody. When Ewell brought her back into town, the people were crazy with joy. They threw a great celebration and heaped every kind of praise upon General Ewell.

General Ewell wrote to his niece Lizzie: “The people made a great fuss about the child, and not knowing how to thank Providence, vented their gratitude upon me in making a fuss over me.” Isn't that amazing? Here was a profane man who could cuss so elaborately, yet at the same time recognized that it was God who had allowed him to recapture the young girl. The people did not know how to thank Providence, how to thank God, and so they made a big fuss over him.

General John Brown Gordon of Georgia said this concerning General Ewell: “He was a compound of anomalies, of the oddest, most eccentric genius in the Confederate Army.” But he also had a hot temper and a sharp tongue. No man had a better heart, nor a worse manner of showing it. He was in truth as tender and sympathetic as a woman, but under the slightest provocation he became externally as rough as a polar bear, and the needles with which he pricked sensibilities were more numerous and keener than those of porcupine quills. He recognized that he could certainly be hard when he wanted to.

Influence of Stonewall Jackson

One of the men who had the most profound influence on the life of General Ewell was General Stonewall Jackson. Jackson was holy and pious, while Ewell was profane. Ewell was quick-tempered and excitable, while Jackson remained always poised and in control. Jackson would be the instrument God used in Ewell's conversion.

Ewell's first meeting and acquaintance with Jackson was not what we would call good. General Jackson had left Ewell to guard Conrad's store while he had gone to Staunton, Virginia. General Banks of the Union Army was in the area. Everyone knows that General Jackson was always secretive about his plans. He hardly ever told his subordinates what they were going to do until they were there and ready to do so.

When James A. Walker of the 13th Virginia called on General Ewell at his headquarters, he heard that Ewell was in a towering rage and decided that it was not the time to call on him. Before he could get away, however, Ewell spotted him and hollered, “Colonel Walker! Did it ever occur to you that General Jackson is crazy?”

Walker had studied under Jackson at Virginia Military Institute and responded with admirable restraint: “I don't know, General. We used to call him Fool Tom Jackson at Virginia Military Institute, but I do not suppose he's really crazy.”

Ewell responded, “I tell you, sir, he's as crazy as a March hare. He's gone away, and I don't know where. He's left me without instructions except to stay here until he returns. But Banks's whole army is advancing on me, and I have not the remotest idea where to communicate with General Jackson.”

“I tell you, sir, he’s crazy, and I’ll just march my division away from here. I do not mean to have it cut to pieces at the behest of a crazy man.” Leaving Ewell, Walker rode to the headquarters of Brigadier Commander Arnold Elsie. Elsie, too, was in a foul humor, having just left General Ewell. When Elsie saw the colonel, Walker mentioned that he had just come from Ewell’s headquarters, and Elsie screeched out, “I tell you, sir, General Ewell is crazy, and I have a serious notion of marching my brigade back to Gordonville.” So everybody was thinking everybody was crazy.

Ewell was certainly displeased with his first encounter with Jackson. He wrote to his niece Lizzie again and referred to Jackson as “that enthusiastic fanatic.” Because General Jackson was hunting Banks’ supply trains—and the logic is very simple: if you cut off an army’s supplies, they cannot fight—Ewell referred to him as “that wagon-hunting deacon,” since Jackson was a deacon as well.

It was only after General Ewell began to see Jackson fight and win battle after battle that his conception of General Jackson began to change. In fact, they became intimate friends and admired and respected each other. General Ewell not only ate with Jackson but was actually invited to worship services with him.

At the Battle of Port Republic, as the battle entered its final stages, Jackson appeared, grasped General Richard Taylor’s hand, and

promised to give General Taylor the captured guns of his Louisiana Brigade—all those cannons. Then he looked at General Ewell, placed his hand upon his sleeve, and remarked, “He who does not see the hand of God in this is blind, sir. I tell you, blind.” Jackson was witnessing to General Ewell all along without Ewell’s recognition of it.

After they became friends and their respect grew, General Ewell saw Colonel Mumford and asked about their conversation, in which he had called Jackson crazy. Colonel Mumford replied that he remembered it well. Ewell replied, “I take it all back, and I will never prejudge another man. Old Jackson is no fool. He knows how to keep his own counsel and does curious things, but he has a method in his madness. He’s not crazy at all.” Later, when Ewell was asked what he thought of Jackson and the Valley campaign, he said, “Well, sir, when he commenced the Valley campaign, I thought he was crazy. Before he ended it, I thought he was inspired.”

Ewell was tremendously impacted by the character and godliness of Stonewall Jackson. He knew about Jackson's prayer life. Stonewall used to ride into battle with his hands raised toward heaven, praying as he went.

During one maneuver, Jackson had told the men about, General Ewell and another officer were concerned about the congestion of their troops marching on the same road. They went to Jackson's tent and asked him to reconsider, telling him they were concerned about the congestion of the men. Jackson said, "Well, I'll give you my answer in the morning." As the men stepped outside, Ewell looked at his friend and said, "Do you know why General Jackson would not decide upon our suggestion at once?"

"It was because he has to pray over it before he makes up his mind." A moment later, Ewell's companion discovered that he had forgotten his sword. Returning to Jackson's tent, he found General Jackson on his knees, praying for divine guidance, just as General Ewell had said.

Several excellent books record the conversion of General Ewell, including Donald C. Pfanz's biography of Ewell, Judith McGuire's

Diary of a Southern Refugee During the War, and Christ in the Camp by J. William Jones. Mrs. McGuire's account is as follows.

General Ewell relates an incident that occurred during their victorious march through the valley last summer, beautifully characteristic of General Jackson. One night, when it was evident that there was to be a battle the next day, General Ewell went to General Jackson for his plans. Jackson replied that he would give them to him the next morning, as they had not yet been formed.

General Ewell felt uneasy and restless and could not sleep. About midnight he arose and, passing through the sleeping multitudes, reached General Jackson's tent. He was about to raise the curtain when his attention was arrested by the voice of prayer. General Jackson was praying fervently for guidance through the coming day. General Ewell remarked to a friend that he had never heard a prayer so devout and beautiful. He then, for the first time in his life, felt a desire to be a Christian. He retired quietly to his tent without disturbing General Jackson. Feeling assured that all would be well, he saw the next morning's fight come off replete with victory.

Pastor Jones writes in Christ in the Camp that, from a well-authenticated source, the conversion of Lieutenant General Ewell, Jackson's able lieutenant, was on this wise. At a council of war one night, Jackson listened attentively to the views of his subordinates and asked until the next morning to present his own. As they came away, A. P. Hill laughingly said to Ewell, “Well, I suppose Jackson wants time to pray over them.” Returning to his quarters shortly afterward, Ewell found Jackson on his knees and heard him praying for God's guidance in the perplexing movements before him. The sturdy veteran was so deeply impressed by the incident and by Jackson's religious character that he said, “If this is religion, then I must have it.”

Ewell's Conversion and Changed Life

It was not long afterward that he made a profession of faith. Pastor Moses Drury Hoge led General Ewell to faith in Jesus Christ. Hoge had been a friend of the family; in fact, Ewell's niece Lizzie had lived with the Hoges during most of the war. General Ewell had been wounded and had his leg amputated, and during the amputation and

healing, Pastor Hoge talked with him and led him to conversion in Jesus Christ.

Was General Ewell's conversion real? Was it genuine? Were there evidences of repentance? The answer is yes.

Ewell had previously been a profane man, one who had developed cursing into an art. In fact, a man who knew General Ewell in the 1850s testified that he could swear the scalp off an Apache. Even as late as 1862, he was said to curse in a style that defies description. But after his conversion, Campbell Brown claimed that he only heard his chief swear twice: once to a stupid courier and once to a man who was riding his horse cruelly. An aide, James Power Smith, affirmed that he never heard the general utter an oath. On the contrary, Smith said, he knew General Ewell to be a Christian gentleman, reverent, devout, and free from the habit of profanity. Ewell's troops evidently believed that his conversion was real because it was generally understood that General Ewell never swore after becoming a Christian.

Pastor W. M. Dame told Hattie after the war, “And we had greatly added respect for his character, that is General Ewell's character on this account, for we knew that at four times he did not confine himself to the dull neutralities of undecorated speech, and it took a strong manhood backed by the grace of God to overcome that fixed habit.” The only exception the pastor knew of was when General Ewell dropped a burning coal on his bare foot. On that occasion, Ewell did let a single expletive slip.

Even so, the minister did not find fault. “I am sure,” said the pastor, “the recording angel considered the circumstances and gave him credit, and a good deal of it, for restraining himself to just one.”

I never will forget when I was a boy working with my father. We had a black man working with us, and his son was out there. The little boy, nine or ten years old, hit his finger with a hammer and came out with a cuss word. His father broke off a limb, took the boy, and whipped the living daylights out of him. Daddy said, “You ought not to beat that little boy like that. I might have said the same thing as I hit my finger.” I never will forget what the black man said: “Oh, Mr. DJ, I didn’t whip him for saying that word.”

He said, “I whipped him because he sounded like he had experience in practicing it.” So Ewell was one of those who had experience in practicing it, I can assure you. Captain Frank A. Bond had been appointed provost marshal of a town by General Ewell. Wanting to see some action, Captain Bond slipped off with the cavalry when it went through, although he had to remain in town. When General Ewell learned that he had gone without orders, he sent for him and brought him back. Captain Bond later said, “The way that old gentleman pitched in to me when I got back was a caution.”

He said Ewell had lost a leg, taken a wife, and joined the church the previous year. He did not swear then, but he was sufficiently emphatic without it. Very obviously, General Ewell changed his mode of speech after he was converted.

I was preaching in Thomasville, Georgia, when the pastor’s brother came to church, and God got hold of him. He was convicted and converted. After church, we went to a restaurant and were eating together when he suddenly broke out laughing, almost uncontrollably. I asked what in the world was so funny. The man was a bird hunter. He said, “I just got to thinking. I’m going to have to retrain all my bird dogs. They won’t understand a word I’m saying now.” Conversion does make a difference.

The Sunday after Ewell returned to the army, following his recovery from his amputated leg, he met with General Lee, General A. P. Hill, and William Pendleton in a worship service conducted by Reverend Beverly Tucker Lacey. Five days later, he was with Pendleton and Bishop John Johns discussing ways to advance and better proclaim the gospel to the soldiers. Ewell’s testimony increased with his troops. Sandy Pendleton said of him, “The more I see of General Ewell, the more I am pleased with him.”

He resembled General Jackson very much in some points of his character, particularly in his utter disregard for his own personal comforts and his inflexibility of purpose. Yesterday he rode some 20 miles on horseback. Remember, the man had an amputated leg. He often rode at full speed and exhibited no signs of fatigue that night. He was thoroughly honest too, Pendleton said, and had only one desire: to conquer the Yankees. “I look for great things from him,

and am glad to say that our troops have for him a great deal of the same feeling they had toward General Jackson, which must increase very much when they find on trial that he is so good a man." Very clearly, then, his conversion was genuine and real.

Ewell's Post-Conversion Testimony

At Gaines Crossroads, anticipating a battle with the Union General Milroy, General Ewell issued a general order reminding his troops that discipline and obedience to orders were the means to secure success. He then asked his troops to join him in prayer, asking for that divine aid in which our lamented and illustrious chief, Stonewall Jackson, had relied. Stonewall was dead at this time, and Ewell asked God's blessing upon the battle.

After the battle was over, and the Confederate forces had won, Ewell announced the victory in a general order. He asked the men and officers of his command to unite with him in returning thanks to their Heavenly Father "for the signal success which has crowned the valor of this command." As had been his predecessor's custom, Ewell directed chaplains to hold religious services in their respective regiments at such times as might be convenient. The significance of the order was not lost on the troops. "Listen," said one soldier to another, "John, have you noticed how General Ewell seems to be aping General Jackson, or copying General Jackson?"

Hal asked the other why, since Jackson's death, Ewell always had God in every one of his dispatches. It sounded as though there had indeed been a change. General Jackson said this concerning his victory over Milroy: "Next to God, he was indebted to General Hayes' staff and to the men there for the almost bloodless victory over General Milroy." Thus, he gave thanks to God and recognized His providence.

General Ewell went with Lee to Gettysburg. On his way, he captured Carlisle, Pennsylvania. In fact, General Ewell wanted to march on to Harrisburg, the capital, and capture it. He was on his way there and would have captured it, because there were very few men there, but General Lee called him back and told him to head toward Gettysburg. Since Ewell had been stationed as a young dragoon at Carlisle Barracks, he was very familiar with that territory.

He had captured the town, set up his headquarters, and everyone knew that General Ewell was in charge.

After he settled into his new headquarters, a delegation of pastors came to General Ewell and asked whether their churches might be open the next day, Sunday, so that they could preach to the people. Ewell replied, "General Ewell, I wish to attend church myself." The ministers thanked him and left. A short time later, they returned and asked whether the General would object if they offered a prayer for President Lincoln.

"Not at all," Ewell replied. "I know of no man in more need of your prayers than Abraham Lincoln." The clergymen then silently withdrew. The next day, the churches had more Confederates in them than Union sympathizers.

What am I trying to show you? Was General Ewell truly converted? The answer is yes. In Acts chapter 9, you have the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. Saul had ranted and raved against the Christians and consented to the death of Stephen. He had gone to Damascus with letters from the high priest authorizing him to throw Christians into prison. In Acts 9:11, the Lord said to Ananias, "Arise, and go in the street which is called Straight, and inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. For, behold, he prayeth." Everyone knew what Saul had been doing to the Christians. What was God telling Ananias? "You do not have to be afraid of Saul any longer. I have him tamed. He is on a leash. He is now mine." The evidence was that he was praying. What in the world is the evidence of true conversion?

Application and Conclusion

Prayer and a desire for the Word of God. After Pastor Hoge returned from England with a large load of Bibles for the troops, General Ewell conveyed his thanks, along with Pastor Hoge's hope and request that he join him in prayer: "Listen, that I may be assisted in following the precepts of the divine word and that I may be guided by its wisdom."

General Ewell displayed the three characteristics of a real converted individual: repentance from known sin, prayer to the

Heavenly Father, and a desire for the Word of God. We can judge whether or not we have been converted by examining our lives and seeing whether these three things are in them. Have we turned from our sins? Are we tamed by the Lord, and do we now pray and cry to our Heavenly Father? Do we desire the pure Word of God?

Isn't it wonderful that the grace of God is able to convert the vilest and the wickedest? He was a profane old soldier, melted and transformed by the grace of God. The same grace that converted General Ewell will convert men and women today, for God is absolutely sovereign and on the throne.

Father, we thank Thee today for Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the truth of Thy Word, for the truth of history, and for those whom Thou hast used all down through these years. May it be that we can be a Stonewall Jackson to someone else and influence them by the grace of God in our lives.

Help us to be a witness and a testimony. In the name of Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 2

Ruling With God

Introduction: The Present Over the Future

Hosea 11:12 says, “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit, but Judah yet ruleth with God and is faithful with the saints.”

This message is not primarily about eschatology, the doctrine of last things, although eschatology will be referred to. It is not a personal attack upon certain views of eschatology. In fact, this message is not even about the sweet by and by. It is about the dirty here and now.

The truth is that most saints want to look forward to the future. They are enamored with what it holds and unconcerned about what they should be doing right now. Many wish to think about heaven, where we will worship our Lord, love Him, and give Him honor, praise, and glory. I certainly believe in eternity, and I believe that in eternity we will be doing those things. However, we should be doing them right now, in time and in history.

What makes an individual think that he will love the Lord in eternity when he does not love Him now? What makes him think

that he will be concerned with giving God honor, glory, praise, and worship in eternity when he is not willing to take the time to do it even now?

We cannot be so enamored with the future that we forget the present. We do not have the future in our grasp; the only thing we have is the present. Proverbs 27:1 says, "Boast not thyself of tomorrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth." We do not have the future; we have only the present.

The Apostle James spells it out clearly in James 4:13–15: "Go to now, ye that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that." We do not have tomorrow; we only have today. We may have eternity in our hearts, but we are not there yet. We must deal with the present until it fades into the future.

Eschatological Views and Ruling with God

Practically every eschatological position has a venue in which the saints rule with God. Historic premillennialism and dispensational premillennialism teach that the saints shall rule and reign with Christ for a thousand years. Amillennialists spiritualize the reign and teach that Christ is ruling and reigning in our hearts right now, and that we are ruling and reigning with Him since He is ruling in our hearts at this present time. Postmillennialists teach that Christ will return after a period of victory in which we are allowed to rule and reign with Him by His Spirit and through His Word.

The point I am trying to make is this: whether you are a premillennialist, an amillennialist, or a postmillennialist, you still have a view of ruling and reigning with Jesus Christ. I am not seeking to explain any of these three positions. I am not going to discuss historic premillennialism versus dispensational premillennialism, amillennialism, or postmillennialism per se. But I do personally believe that the saints shall be enabled by the power of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the Word of God to see victory in time and in history, because our Lord Jesus Christ is the victor. The

Bible tells us in Romans 8, verse 37, “Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.”

So in Hosea chapter 11 and verse 12 is where we are, and the thought is “ruling with God.” I am mentioning these eschatological positions because every eschatological position has a view of somehow the saints ruling with God. But if you look in Hosea 11 and verse 12 again, Scripture says, “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints.”

The Contrast Between Israel and Judah

The thing that struck me as I read through the book of Hosea recently was this verse: “But Judah yet ruleth with God and is faithful with the saints.” So Judah was ruling with God in time and in history. There are divisions among scholars on the meaning in the translation of the Hebrew in Hosea 11 and verse 12. However, I do believe that our King James Bibles have it correct, and I believe that I can demonstrate that based upon not only the

We have not only the immediate context, but also the remote context. We do have the preserved, pure, and plain Word of God. A little later, I am going to share at least three quotations to demonstrate that historically godly men have expounded this verse exactly as it is given to us in our Bibles.

To begin with, we need to observe and concentrate upon the obvious contrast in this verse. Hosea 11:12 says, “Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God and is faithful with the saints.” Here is a strong contrast between Israel, the northern kingdom, and Judah, the southern kingdom.

As I stated earlier, Ephraim was the leading tribe in the northern kingdom. Sometimes, when you read the Bible, you will find “Ephraim” speaking not merely of that tribe, but of the ten tribes comprising Israel. At other times, Ephraim and Israel are mentioned together, and I believe that is done for emphasis.

The ten northern tribes defected from the house of David during the reign of King Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon. Rehoboam

was a tyrant and exceptionally stupid in his dealings with his people. You can read all about that split in 1 Kings chapter 12.

I am not dealing with the split right now. What I do want to show you is that Jeroboam, the first king of Israel and of the ten northern tribes, made the two golden calves that introduced idolatry into Israel and led the people away into apostasy. Hold Hosea chapter 11 and look quickly in your Bibles at 1 Kings chapter 12. I want to show you what Jeroboam did. Lord willing, in the not-too-distant future, I will examine this passage in detail.

This was after the split, after the ten tribes had left Judah and Benjamin, the two tribes in the southern kingdom. In 1 Kings 12:25, the Bible says, "Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: if this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. Wherefore the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."

"And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi."

Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast in Judah, and offered upon the altar. He did this in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made, and placed in Bethel the priests of the high places. He offered upon the altar in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the month which he had devised of his own heart, and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel. So obviously, Jeroboam had led the ten northern tribes into apostasy.

The northern kingdom paid for its rebellion against God. In 722 BC, they were taken into captivity into Assyria. Their land was

ravaged, their wealth plundered, their homes devastated, and multitudes lost their lives. The Assyrians were known for cruelty and violence. They would skin people alive, began the crudest form of crucifixion, and pile heaps of skulls belonging to individuals they had decapitated. Israel paid for this rebellion very dearly. It is equally true that Judah, the southern kingdom, was judged and sent into captivity into Babylon.

However, that was in 586 BC. Thus, 136 years elapsed between the northern kingdom going into captivity and the southern kingdom going into captivity. Certainly, Judah sinned, but that does not mean that Judah sinned immediately, initially, and instantly. For a while, evidently, they did remain faithful with God, according to Hosea 11:12.

Hosea 11:12 says, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit"—there is the northern kingdom—"but Judah yet ruleth with God and is faithful with the saints." That is the southern kingdom. This is the strong contrast between Israel and Judah in the immediate context.

In Hosea 10, God is dealing with the ten northern tribes. He says, "Israel is an empty vine, he bringeth forth fruit unto himself: according to the multitude of his fruit he hath increased the altars"—that is idolatry—"according to the goodness of his land they have made goodly images. Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty: he shall break down their altars, he shall spoil their images. For now they shall say, We have no king, because we feared not the LORD; what then should a king do to us? They have spoken words, swearing falsely in making a covenant: thus judgment springeth up as hemlock"—which is poison—"in the furrows of the field. The inhabitants of Samaria shall fear because of the calves of Beth-aven: for the people thereof shall mourn over it, and the priests thereof that rejoiced on it, for the glory thereof, because it is departed from it. It shall be also carried unto Assyria"—that is where he is going to send them—"for a present to king Jareb: Ephraim shall receive shame, and Israel shall be ashamed of his own counsel. As for Samaria"—the capital of the northern kingdom—"her king is cut off as the foam upon the water. The high places also of Aven, the sin of Israel, shall be destroyed: the thorn and the thistle shall come up

on their altars; and they shall say to the mountains, Cover us; and to the hills, Fall on us."

Then, in verse 15, he says it again: "So shall Bethel do unto you because of your great wickedness: in a morning shall the king of Israel utterly be cut off."

SCRIPTURE READING - Hosea 11:1-6 (KJV)

> God is condemning the apostasy of those ten northern tribes. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. I taught Ephraim also to go, taking them by their arms; but they knew not that I healed them. I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love: and I was to them as they that take off the yoke on their jaws, and I laid meat unto them. He shall not return into the land of Egypt, but the Assyrian shall be his king, because they refused to return. And the sword shall abide on his cities, and shall consume his branches, and devour them, because of their own counsels."

"And my people are bent to backsliding from me: though they called them to the most High, none at all would exalt him." So obviously, we are reading here of God's condemnation of Israel, those ten northern tribes that apostatized from him by making those golden calves. When we get to verse 12 of chapter 11, the contrast is very clear.

Historical and Scholarly Support

John Calvin comments on the words, "But Judah yet ruleth with God and is faithful with the saints": "He afterwards subjoins that Judah still ruled or held sovereignty with God and was faithful with the saints. By saying that he held sovereignty with God, he declares, I doubt not, that the kingdom of Judah was legitimate because it was connected with a pure and lawful priesthood. From whence did arise the corruptions in the other kingdom but because the people had revolted from the family of David.

"Hence it was that the new king changed both the law and the worship of God and erected new temples. Israel then did not rule

with God, for the kingdom was spurious and the beginning of the dispersion, so that the people forsook God. But of Judah, the prophet speaks much otherwise, that he still ruled with God, because the posterity of David, though we know that they labored under many vices, yet had not changed the worship prescribed by the law, except that Ahaz had erected an altar like one at Damascus, as the sacred history relates. But yet pure religion always prevailed at Jerusalem. But the prophet speaks comparatively, as it will be presently seen, for he does not wholly excuse the Jews, but says that in comparison with Israel, they yet rule with God. For the kingdom and the priesthood, as we have said, were joined together in Judah, and both had been divinely instituted."

Calvin is saying that they had a legitimate priesthood, legitimate worship, and a legitimate ruler; therefore, they ruled with God.

Matthew Henry calls this a pleasant commendation of the integrity of the two tribes, Benjamin and Judah, which they held fast. Their faithfulness aggravated the perfidiousness of the ten tribes and explains why God had mercy in store for Judah, but not for Israel. Judah yet ruled with his God and was faithful with the saints, or with the Most Holy. Thus, Matthew Henry understood Judah at this time to have remained faithful.

John Gill likewise says, "But Judah yet ruleth with God. A theocracy was as yet acknowledged and supported among them." Theocracy means the rule of God by His power: theos is the Greek word for God, and kratos is the Greek word for power. God ruled in the midst of Judah, and they ruled with Him. Their kings ruled in the fear of God, according to His laws, statutes, and appointments, rather than their own, particularly in the days of Hezekiah, which may be referred to here. The people retained and practiced the true worship and service of God. Since that worship is the truest liberty, it is also the highest honor and dignity.

Such are rulers with God, as all the Lord's people—everyone who believes in Christ—are. By His grace they are made kings and priests. They appear to be so by their new birth. They are clothed, fed, and guarded as princes, as the sons of a king, and as kings themselves. They possess the riches and power of kings. They possess the kingdom of grace now, which is within them, where grace reigns

through righteousness over their lusts and corruptions. Like princes, they have great power in prayer with God, are heirs of the kingdom of glory, and shall reign with Christ on earth.

Yet this is also an epitaph of Judah, who kept to the word and worship of the true God, as the saints of old and their ancestors had done. They walked in the good old way, in the way of good men, kept the paths of righteousness, abode by the true priests of the Lord who were set apart and sanctified for that office, hearkened to the prophets—holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit—and adhered firmly to holy things.

Whether one speaks of John Calvin, Matthew Henry, or John Gill, the conclusion is the same: Judah ruled with God because they had legitimate government, legitimate worship, and legitimate obedience. This stood in contrast to the rebellion and apostasy of the ten northern tribes.

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Chronicles 13:4-12 (KJV)

Biblical Corroboration: Abijah's Speech

The Word of God corroborates the interpretation, not only that I am giving, but that which Calvin, Henry, and Gill gave as well. Hold Hosea chapter 11 and turn back in your Bibles to 2 Chronicles chapter 13. Here you are going to see King Abijah, who is about to enter into a battle with Jeroboam. Watch carefully what Abijah says to Jeroboam.

"And Abijah stood up upon mount Zemaraim, which is in mount Ephraim, and said, Hear me, thou Jeroboam, and all Israel; so Abijah is talking to Jeroboam and the ten northern tribes. Ought ye not to know that the LORD God of Israel gave the kingdom over Israel to David for ever, even to him and to his sons by a covenant of salt? Yet Jeroboam the son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon the son of David, is risen up, and hath rebelled against his lord. And there are gathered unto him vain men, the children of Belial, and have strengthened themselves against Rehoboam the son of Solomon, when Rehoboam was young and tenderhearted, and could not withstand them. And now ye think to withstand the kingdom of the LORD in the hand of the sons of David; and ye be a great multitude, and

> there are with you golden calves, which Jeroboam made you for gods. Have ye not cast out the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and have made you priests after the manner of the nations of other lands? so that whosoever cometh to consecrate himself with a young bullock and seven rams, the same may be a priest of them that are no gods. But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him; and the priests, which minister unto the LORD, are the sons of Aaron, and the Levites wait upon their business: and they burn unto the LORD every morning and every evening burnt sacrifices and sweet incense: the shewbread also set they in order upon the pure table; and the candlestick of gold with the lamps thereof, to burn every evening: for we keep the charge of the LORD our God; but ye have forsaken him. And, behold, God himself is with us for our captain, and his priests with sounding trumpets to cry alarm against you. O children of Israel, fight ye not against the LORD God of your fathers; for ye shall not prosper."

Abijah said, "You are the ones that have left the true worship of God. You left the orderly government that God ordained. You left God's orderly way of worship. You kicked out the priests, the Levites, and you have men of the lowest order as your priests and Levites. You are not worshiping God. You are worshiping idols. You are idolaters. You are apostate. We, however, are abiding by the law of God, the worship of God, and the government of God." According to what Abijah had just said, Israel was not ruling with God at this point; Israel was rebelling against God. Judah was ruling with God because they had the Word of God, the law of God, and the worship of God.

The Meaning of Ruling with God

Ruling with God involves submission to Him, obedience to His orderly way, giving Him the honor, praise, and worship that is due unto Him and His holy name, and applying His law to every situation and every circumstance. Do you remember in Genesis 32 that Jacob's name was changed to Israel? Why was his name changed to Israel? It was because he wrestled with the angel and said, "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." He said, "For as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed."

The very name Israel literally means "prevailing" or "ruling with God."

At this time in history, the Israel of the ten northern tribes were apostates. They were not ruling with God. According to Hosea 11 verse 12, Judah at this point would have been the true Israel of God because they were ruling in God and under God, and they alone would deserve the name Israel.

When we order our lives in agreement with God and in conformity to the Word of God, and when our lives are in legitimate and lawful compliance to God's law, to the best of our ability, knowledge, and power, it could be said that we are ruling with God. It is true that we are being ruled by God, but at the same time we are ruling ourselves and bringing our lives into conformity to His mandates.

Obedience Over Ritual: Zechariah's Message

Someone says, "Well, I want to rule with God." Really? Let us look at the Scripture and see what you do not wish to do if you really want to rule with God. Turn to the book of Zechariah, right before Malachi, the next to the last book in the Old Testament, and go to Zechariah chapter 7.

SCRIPTURE READING - Zechariah 7:2-14 (KJV)

It is impossible to be in rebellion and submission at the same time. It is impossible to rule with God and be in rebellion to God.

“When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regem-melech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, and to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?” That is, while they were in captivity.

“Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?

> And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?"
>
> "Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?"
>
> "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart. But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear. Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts. Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts: but I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate."
>
> They came and said, "Should we weep and mourn in the fifth month and the seventh month, just like we've been doing for 70 years?" And what did God say? "When you fasted, did you at all fast to me? No. You had a ritual, you had a ceremony. And when you ate and drank, did you eat and drink to me? No, you ate and you drank for yourself."

"You had no thought of me in your mind." He said, "Let me tell you something. If you want to know what you should have been doing, you should have listened to the former prophets before you were sent into captivity. The former prophets told you how to live, how to act, and how to worship. You would not listen." The point is very clear.

Israel, just like a lot of professing Christians, are more concerned with ceremony, ritual, and religion, while at the same time they are

disobedient, unholy, ungodly, and rebellious, and somehow think that they are God's people and are going to rule with God.

God said in Zechariah 8:15-17, "So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not. These are the things that ye shall do; Speak ye every man the truth to his neighbour; execute the judgment of truth and peace in your gates: and let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD." If you compare these verses with Zechariah 7:9-10, you find the same command: "Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother: and oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart."

He said, "I told you once before what you should be doing, and I'm telling you the same thing again." Do you realize that submission and obedience trump ritual, ceremony, and religion every time? Micah 6:8 says, "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

Eschatology Must Produce Present Holiness

Walking with God, living for God, and obeying His Word equals ruling with God. Now listen to some questions. Everybody loves eschatology, the Doctrine of Last Things. They love to have their ears tickled with what might be and what might come. Let me bring you back to the present time. Why are you looking forward to ruling with God in the future? Someone answers, "When that comes to pass, I will be ruling under God's authority and sharing in His purpose and plan."

If you rule with God, what will be the essence of your rule? What will you do? Your answer is, “I will be worshiping, honoring, and glorifying God, fulfilling His will, and applying His law to every instance and every circumstance.” Wonderful. But think this through. If you are looking forward to ruling with God in the future, and that involves being under His authority and sharing in His purpose and plan, is that not what you are supposed to be doing

right now in time and history? Why would you be interested in doing that in the sweet by and by and not be interested in doing it right now in the dirty now and now? If ruling with God includes loving, honoring, worshiping, and glorifying Him, and applying His law to every individual and every circumstance, is that not what you are supposed to be doing right now?

If you wish to do those things in the future, why do you not wish to do them now? Someone says, “But you do not understand. I will be ruling over others.” Really? Why would you wish to rule over others and not rule over yourself? Why would you wish to apply God’s law to someone else while being unwilling to apply it to yourself? Are you a Pharisee? Are you a hypocrite? How did Judah rule with God in time and history? By having an orderly government, orderly worship, and doing everything according to God’s Word.

Turn in your Bibles to 1 John chapter 3. I want to show you how so many people have a defective eschatology. You say, “You are attacking my eschatological position.” If the shoe fits, wear it. Look at 1 John 3, beginning with verse 2: “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.” Now watch carefully: “And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.”

Did I read that right? If your eschatology does not make you holier, godlier, more obedient, and more like Christ, then you have a wrong, wicked, and unbiblical view of the return of Christ. Your eschatology is deficient. If you really believe that Christ is returning, Scripture says it will make us purify ourselves, even as He is pure.

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 25:14-29 (KJV)

Let me go one step further. Listen carefully. If your eschatology does not encourage you to rule with Christ now in time in history, if it does not encourage you to rule with Christ in the dirty now and now, how is it preparing you to rule with him in the future? If you are unable to rule over the smallest, simplest things right now in your life, what makes you think you're going to be ruling over something great in the future? If you cannot control your own self, what makes you think you're going to be able to control others?

> Do you remember the parable of the talents? Matthew 25, verse 14: "For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: and I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:"

The Lord said, “Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”

If you are not willing to work and serve and rule now, what makes you think you will be able to work, rule, and serve in the future? If you cannot rule your life under God, with God, now, you certainly will not be able to do so in the future.

The first application is this: We should learn from this text that the true worship of God and submission to His Word and His will are not only true liberty and freedom, but also our dignity and honor. "Judah yet ruleth with God." In other words, the princes—those who had authority over government—ruled in light of the Word of God.

Applications: True Worship, Remnant Faithfulness, and the Rule of Scripture

The Bible says in 2 Samuel chapter 23 and verse 3, "He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." At that particular time, the princes of Judah were just and ruling in the fear of God. It was their honor and praise to do so. The priests did what they were supposed to do, and the Levites did as they were supposed to do. It is our honor to rule with God as we obey Him.

Secondly, go back to Hosea chapter 11 and look at verse 12. This should be a very obvious application. God said, "Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit; but Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the saints." When we see how many compass God about with lies and deceit, it should make us thankful that God does have a remnant who cleave to Him with purpose of heart and are faithful to and with the saints. They are the ones who are actually ruling with God.

Idolaters, vassals, and slaves to the devil and to their own superstitious fears are not worshipers of God. They are worshipers of themselves or the devil. The only way that you can worship God and rule with God is by obeying God. Israel's apostasy was aggravated by Judah's integrity. The faithful remnant will always be a stain and a reproach to those who are unfaithful.

That is one reason why the faithful remnant are always hated and despised. Here is the third application. When you consider our word

"rule," think about what it means to rule with God. Here are some of the ways our English word "rule" is used.

First, it refers to dominance or power through legal authority. We do have dominance and power through God's Word, which is our legal authority. Secondly, it is a principle or condition that customarily governs behavior. God's Word is to govern our behavior. Thirdly, it is a prescribed guide for conduct or action, something to be regarded as a normative example and prescribed guide for conduct and action. Is that what God's Word is? Isn't that how God rules us? It is also a basic generalization accepted as true that can be used as a basis for reasoning or conduct.

If we are interested in ruling with our Lord in the future, we should be exercising ourselves by ruling with Him in the present through practical, biblical, and godly obedience. Let me say this very plainly: His Word is our prescribed rule. His Word is our authority.

In Galatians 6:16, the Apostle Paul says, "And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God." As many as walk according to this rule. What rule? The word "rule" there is the Greek word kanon. It is where we get our English word "canon." We talk about the canon of Scripture, the Old Testament canon, and the New Testament canon. The word "canon," or kanon here, means a rule, a rod, or a measuring stick. "As many as walk according to this rule, this rod, this measuring stick, peace be upon them, and mercy upon the Israel of God." The Israel of God and those who rule with God are those who follow this standard and are in submission to Him. Are you ruling with God?

Think about it. If you are not ruling with Him now, what makes you think you are going to rule with Him in the future?

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow to Thee. We thank You for Your Word. We thank You for Your truth. We ask, Lord, that You would help us, build us up in the most holy faith, and help us to rule with Thee, Lord, by living biblical, godly, practical, obedient lives. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

This program was produced by Dominion Ministry. For more information about Pastor Weaver's sermons, contact Dominion Ministry by mail at 7400 Abercorn Street, Suite 705, PMB 175,

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CHAPTER 3

The Puritan Hope: An Eschatology of Victory

Introduction: The God of Hope and the Hope of the Gospel

Romans chapter 15 and Colossians chapter 1 introduce the truth I want to consider. I will not be expounding these two specific verses tonight. Rather, I am going to use them to point out a truth. Romans 15:13 says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Note that God is specifically designated as the God of hope. He tells us that we are to abound in hope.

Then, in Colossians chapter 1 and verse 23, the Word of God says very clearly, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." Note the phrase, "the hope of the gospel."

It is not my intent tonight to deal with these two specific texts that I have just read in Romans and Colossians, nor is it my particular intent to deal with various and sundry views of eschatology. Eschatology, of course, is the doctrine of last things. It is my intent to expound our hope in God and His gospel.

You have to understand that, when it comes to eschatology, good and godly men have differed over these things for many, many years, especially over the return of Jesus Christ. There is certainly no way that I could settle that great question in one message, and probably it is not even going to be settled until our Lord returns. My intent is simply to demonstrate, not only from history but also from Scripture, that there is indeed an eschatology of victory.

Christians do not need a defeatist, discouraged, distressed, and detrimental attitude in any area, and especially not in reference to the Lord Jesus Christ and His gospel.

The Problem of Defeatism in Modern Christianity

The Puritans, of course, had a great influence upon the founding of this country. But it is true that, since the founding of our country and since the influx of Puritanism there, we have, basically, in one sense of the word, gone from optimism to pessimism. We have basically denied victory and embraced defeat. In fact, I have a good friend who wrote a book entitled The Death of the Church Victorious.

We seem somehow, as Christians, to masochistically enjoy being ruled over, dominated, and subjugated by the wicked. Our hope has become one of flight or rescue instead of one that is conquering for the Lord Jesus Christ. It is true that our eschatology affects our lives. How you view the doctrine of last things determines, in one sense of the word, how you act, how you live, and how you respond to certain things.

If you and I are going to remain faithful in every venue—the cultural, the domestic, the financial, the religious, and the evangelistic—we have to understand that our Lord is absolutely victorious in every area of life. It was Professor John Murray who said this:

"The more great and glorious things you expect from God as the downfall of Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, the conquest of the nations to Christ, the breaking of all yokes, the New Jerusalem's coming down from above, the extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit, and a more general union among all saints, the more holy, yea, the more eminently holy in all your ways and actings it becomes you to be."

What he is saying is this: Obviously, your eschatology is going to affect how you live. It was Dr. J. Vernon McGee, years ago, whom I heard with my own ears as he was teaching on the radio. He said, "You don't polish brass on a sinking ship."

Biblical Basis for an Eschatology of Victory

Of course, he was talking about this world. Well, first of all, this world is not a ship. Secondly, this world, although it may be populated with wicked and evil individuals, is not going down with the wicked. The Apostle Paul stated that very clearly in Romans chapter 8. In Romans 8, beginning with verse 19, he spoke in regard to this world, to the creature, or God's creation: "For the earnest expectation of the creature"—or the creation, that is, the world—"waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

“For the creature”—or the creation—“was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, because the creature”—or the creation itself also—“shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

The Apostle Paul is teaching that this world, although it is now under a curse and populated with the wicked, shall also be delivered from this curse into the glorious liberty of the children of God.

In 2 Peter 3, beginning with verse 12, notice what the Apostle Peter says concerning this world: “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we,” that is, we believers, “nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for a new heaven and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.”

Peter is saying that this earth is going to be purified with fire and ultimately become a new heaven and a new earth. This promise is from the Old Testament. Isaiah 66:22 says, “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.” He is speaking of a new earth and a new heaven that He is going to make.

That is why, in Revelation 21:1, John the Apostle said, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” John even speaks of the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven as a bride adorned for her husband. If the New Jerusalem is coming down, it has to come down to something, which obviously would be the earth as well.

When Romans 8 is put together with 2 Peter, Isaiah, and Revelation, the Bible indicates that the earth is not going to be forsaken. It is not going to be destroyed or given up. Rather, it is going to be purified, made new, and set free from the bondage of the curse and from the bondage of sin.

In that light, we had probably better get busy occupying and doing business as our Lord has commanded us, as we read in the New Testament when He said, "Occupy till I come." The word "occupy" literally means to do business.

When this country was founded, our Puritan forefathers had a vision. They foresaw this country as literally a city set on the hill for the entire world to see. "The entire Puritan experiment in America was aimed at creating a city set on the hill for all the world to see, a model republic based on biblical law and Christian charity for the whole world to emulate."

The Puritan Vision and Historical Confessions

The Puritans also believed in the concept of patient gradualism. They might not live to see the fruit of the field that they had planted. They understood the kingdom of heaven as progressive and having gradual growth, as a stone cut without hands that becomes a great mountain and fills the earth. The kingdom of heaven was to attain universal dominion, but through slow degrees and gradual progress.

The Puritans understood that the Messiah would thus gradually be magnified until He became the omnipotent ruler of the world. Thus the battle cry of the Reformation was, "No king but Christ."

They expected that to become a temporal reality. There were historic declarations of faith that taught this very concept, including the Savoy Declaration of 1658, one of the earliest statements concerning the victory of Christ on earth, in time, and in history. It says:

"As the Lord in His care and love toward His church hath in His infinite wise providence exercised it with a great variety in all ages for the good of them that love Him and His own glory, so according to His promise we expect that in the latter days, Antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of His dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world more quiet, peaceable, and glorious condition than they have ever enjoyed before."

Here the Savoy Declaration says that Christ is going to conquer, and finally it will be, for the saints of God, far more peaceful and far more glorious. Rather than quote Puritan after Puritan, I will show you a number of passages that undeniably demonstrate that our Lord is omnipotent and victorious in His total, absolute dominion.

Now you say, “Wait a minute, Brother Weaver, how in the world does what you preach tonight correlate with what you preached the last three nights?” Well, let me just tell you this. You have to understand that there is no contradiction between the judgment of God and what I’m preaching tonight, because all throughout the Bible, oftentimes God has used judgment to conquer His enemies and to destroy His enemies. So what I want to do tonight is this: I want to show you a number of passages from the Word of God, which I believe are just frankly undeniable. Then I want to summarize not just the Puritan hope, but our hope of victory in time and in history. As I’m preaching this tonight, I’m well aware of the fact that we’re living in a day of apostasy, lukewarmness, and apathy.

It appears from all appearances that Christianity is on the decline, and, of course, Islam and numerous other sects and isms are on the

increase. May I remind you of one simple truth? The Word of God teaches us that we as Christians do not live by sight, but we live by faith. Sometimes people look at me and say, “Brother Weaver, everything is going wrong. Everything is going wrong.” And I will say, “Let me add to that: everything is going wrong just right.” Because God is in control, and He is the One that determines everything.

You have to remember this: there is no such thing as an accident in a world that is ruled by God. God is the absolute Sovereign in heaven and in earth. God is only going to allow that to come to pass which ultimately will redound to His honor and His glory. You say, “How can you say that?” Well, let me show you. Psalm 76 and verse 10 is a very wonderful, very beautiful, and very powerful verse, one that you need to memorize. The Word of God says it like this: “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.”

Do you want to know how much wrath and sin and wickedness will happen in this world? Just enough that is going to redound to God’s honor and God’s glory. You’re going to say, “Well, how in the world can sin and wickedness redound to God’s honor and God’s glory?”

If there was no sin or wickedness, we would know nothing of God's judgment, holiness, righteousness, mercy, or graciousness. God says, “I will allow just enough that's ultimately going to redound either to My justice or to My grace and My mercy; and that which will not glorify Me, I will restrain.”

A good illustration is found in Genesis chapter 20, when Abimelech took Sarah, Abram's wife. God came to Abimelech that night in a dream and said, “If you touch her, you're a dead man. I'll kill you. If you touch her, you're a dead man, for she's another man's wife.” Abimelech said, “Lord, in the integrity of my heart, in the innocence of my hands, I've done this thing.”

God said, “Yea, I know that. Therefore, I've withheld thee from sinning against Me.” And so God restrained Abimelech. Certainly, God's going to do exactly what Psalm 76, verse 10, says. He's not

going to allow anything to come to pass except that which will ultimately honor and glorify Him.

Now, contrary to all circumstantial evidence and to all situational observances, Jesus Christ is still seated on the throne of His glory, ruling and reigning and subduing all things. He is in absolute control. He subdues His enemies in His time and in His way. The Bible says plainly in 1 Corinthians 15, verse 25, “For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.” Jesus Christ is ruling now, and, contrary to what you and I are seeing, contrary to sight, He is in fact subduing His enemies. He shall continue to do so until everyone is totally and absolutely subdued.

Let me show you some passages. Notice Isaiah, chapter two. Mark this passage, because we will come back to it a little later. Isaiah, chapter two, verse two, through verse four. Look at the prophecy here:

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house”—that is His kingdom—“shall be established in the top of the mountains”—that is, over every other kingdom—“and shall be exalted above the hills.” Now watch: “and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks.”

“Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.” But notice that the Bible says in verse 2 that the Lord’s kingdom is going to be established, and all nations shall flow into it. When this passage speaks of nations coming to Christ, submitting to Christ, and living obediently, it is not talking about eternity; it is talking about time in history. His law is going to be the absolute authority, and all nations will ultimately submit to Him.

Daniel said, “I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought Him near before Him.” That is Christ

coming to the Father. Verse 14 says, “And there was given Him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages should serve Him: His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Notice the questions you can ask from this verse: Who shall serve Him? How many? The answer is all. His dominion shall never be destroyed, and His kingdom shall never pass away. Daniel 7:27 says it again: “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve Him and obey Him.” All dominions shall serve Him and obey Him.

When you read Isaiah 2, Daniel 7, and numerous other passages, these are the passages that should encourage us not only in evangelism and witnessing, but in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Three Truths on Which to Hang Your Hope

He is the absolute victor. He cannot fail, and He will not fail. It was these truths that gave rise to the great missionary movements of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The same truth motivated and inspired the Apostle Paul in 2 Timothy 2:10: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” He said, “I endure all things for them.”

The Apostle Paul understood that our Lord had a people. He understood that He had a kingdom, and that everything would come to pass exactly as He ordained it. I believe we can summarize it accurately and biblically in this way: The kingdom has come because the King has come. The kingdom is here because the King is here. And the kingdom is coming more fully and completely because the King will return as well.

If we desire to see the increase and victory of that kingdom, we must pray and preach as He has commanded. Let me give you three very practical, yet important, truths on which to hang your hope.

You may say, “Look at Islam. Look at the White House, Congress, and our government. Look at the wicked. We are so deep in trouble.” Yes, I understand that. But that does not change the fact that God is sovereign and on the throne. It does not change the reality of Holy Scripture. Things may be going wrong, but they are going wrong just right.

Tonight, I want to give you three truths from Scripture on which to hang your hope and which will guarantee victory for the child of God. Every aspect of our hope is rooted and grounded in these three truths. What are they? First of all, the promise of the Sovereign. Go back in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 2. In Isaiah chapter 2 and verse 2, here is the promise.

The Promise of the Sovereign

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above all the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us His ways, and we will walk in His paths.” We will walk in His paths: obedience. “For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” So our Lord is going to be ruling and reigning.

How can this promise be real? Have you ever meditated on the promises of God? There are a multitude of promises in the Bible, but you need to meditate upon those that give us victory, especially in light of the context of this message. Can it be true that our Lord’s kingdom shall be superior to all other kingdoms and that all nations shall flow into it? If that promise is true, how in the world can this be? It is certainly true because God is who He said He is.

He is the Great I Am. He is the one and only true God; there is none other beside Him. It can be because He is the omnipotent, all-powerful God of heaven and earth. He is the sovereign God; He is in control. When you look at the promises of God, there are two attributes of God that are connected very intricately with them.

The first is His faithfulness, and the second is His power. Moreover, not only are the faithfulness and power of God connected with His promises, but the very Godhood of God is connected with them. For if God ever violated His promise or did not keep His word, He would cease to be God. Obviously, if God ever lied, He would cease to be God.

Do you realize there are usually three things that will stop a man from fulfilling his word? I could say to Brother Ray, “Well, I’ll be at your house tomorrow at 3 p.m.” I could give him that promise, but I may not have the foresight to envision all the problems involved in trying to get to his house at 3 o’clock. My car could break down; I could have a flat tire, be in a wreck, be in the hospital, or be dead.

I do not have the foresight to foresee everything that would hinder me from keeping my word to him. Secondly, I may not have the necessary power to bring my word to pass. If I am sick with the flu, obviously I am not going to have the power to do it. And thirdly, I may not have the character necessary to bring to pass my word. None of these three things apply to God. God is omniscient; He knows everything. God is omnipotent; He is all-powerful. And there is the character of God. He is infinitely holy and infinitely faithful, and He cannot deny Himself.

Hebrews 6:16-19 says, "For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec."

God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel—the unchangeability of His word and the unchangeability of His person—confirmed it with an oath. God gave His promise. When we talk about God's immutability, God cannot change for the worse, because He is perfect. If He changed

for the worse, He would cease to be God. And He cannot change for the better, because He is already perfect.

He is God, and He knows the end from the beginning, according to Acts 15:18: "Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world." Moreover, He said in Isaiah 46:10, "My counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure." Why do you think God said to Moses, "Tell them I AM hath sent you"? "I AM THAT I AM." That indicates that God is immutable. He is unchangeable.

His promises do not change. In Deuteronomy 7, verse 9, He said it like this: "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations." Note that He is the faithful God. You should read through your Bibles, understand, and underline the faithfulness of God every time you see it. Did you know the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 1:9, "Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it."

Do you realize your calling? Your salvation is based upon the faithfulness of God. God cannot help but be faithful. He is God. His promises are real, genuine, and true.

How does this apply to our hope of victory in time and history? In the Old Testament—and you could probably say it in the New Testament as well, but in the Old Testament primarily—who were the two chief enemies of the covenant people? There was Egypt, and there was Assyria. For 400 years they were in bondage in Egypt. The ten northern tribes went into captivity in 722 into Assyria.

Consider what God says about these two horrible enemies of His people. In Isaiah 19:18, we read: "In that day"—that is, the day of the Lord's victory—"in that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear by the Lord of hosts.

One shall be called, “The city of destruction.” So there are five-sixths of Egypt to be called. Now watch: “In that day shall there be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the Lord.” It shall be “for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt.” They shall cry unto the Lord because of the oppressors, and He shall send them “a Saviour, and a Great One,” and He shall deliver them.

"And the Lord shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the Lord in that day." They shall do sacrifice and oblation, vow a vow unto the Lord, and perform it. "And the Lord shall smite Egypt: He shall smite and heal it." They shall return to the Lord, He shall be intreated of them, and He shall heal them.

"In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria," and the Egyptian and Assyrian shall serve together. "In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land." The Lord of hosts shall bless them, saying, "Blessed be Egypt My people, and Assyria the work of My hands, and Israel Mine inheritance."

Five-sixths of Egypt being called, and Assyria designated as the work of His hands—what a promise! In Psalm 68:31, God says, "Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God." We have to conclude that God has His people scattered everywhere, and He will bring them in just as He promised. The promises of God are absolutely true. When God said that His kingdom would be above all other kingdoms and that all nations would flow into it, that is time in history. Yes, it shall be, because His promise is absolutely sure.

So what do we hang our hope on? First of all, we hang our hope on the promises of the Sovereign. He cannot fail. He cannot change. His word is true.

Secondly, we hang our hope on the person of the Savior. Did you know that Jesus Christ is God? He is God incarnate. The Bible says in 1 Timothy 3, verse 16, "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." When you consider the person of Jesus Christ, you must remember that He is God manifest in the flesh.

The Person of the Savior

What did He tell Thomas? "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." Yes, He is the God-man. He's perfect God and perfect man. Consequently, He is the only mediator between God and men. That's

why 1 Timothy 2 and verse 5 says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Jesus Christ is uniquely the Son of God. Colossians 1, beginning with verse 13, says, “Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of His dear Son: in whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.” Concerning Jesus Christ, verse 15 says, “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all”

“Things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist.” He is the Creator. He is the God-Man. He is God. There is nothing that was not created by Him.

In 1 Timothy 6, beginning with verse 13, Paul places Jesus Christ in this context. The Word of God says: “I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; that thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: which in His times He shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.” The commandment is to be kept until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords.

I never will forget, years ago, being invited by a preacher brother to go to a gun show in Albany, Georgia. When we arrived, I found that the gun show was at the Shriner’s Temple. As I walked to the door, I saw a parking spot marked, “Reserved for the Potentate.” I looked at my preacher friend and said, “Isn’t that nice? They’ve reserved a parking place for Jesus Christ when He returns. He’s the only Potentate that I know of.” That is what the Bible says. He is the blessed and only Potentate. He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods.

You have to consider His person. Do you think for one minute that Jesus Christ, as Creator, as Controller, as Inheritor, as Lord of all, as King of kings and God of gods, is going to fail? Moreover, look in Psalm 2 and see what the Father told the Son. This is an amazing Psalm. I love this passage concerning the wicked. In fact, let's read verse one and start there.

"Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." In other words, they do not like God's sovereign limitations that He places upon them. They say, "We're going to break our bands. We're going to do what we want to do. We'll make our own law. We'll make our own rules. We'll show Him."

Look in verse 4: "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath, and vex them in His sore displeasure." Look what He says: "Yet have I set My King"—that is Jesus Christ—"upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee." Watch verse 8. Here is what the Father says to the Son: "Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession."

Do you realize all Jesus Christ has to do is say, "Father, I want this"? The Father said, "Just ask Me. I'll give it to You. I'll give You the heathen for Your possession. I'll give You the uttermost parts of the earth. Just ask and it's Yours." Of course, because He is the only begotten Son. He is God incarnate. He is the God-man. He is the Creator. You have to consider His person.

Secondly, you have to consider His position. Jesus Christ is the resurrected, ascended, glorified King of kings and Lord of lords. He is seated at the right hand of the Father. I get so tickled, in one sense of the word, around Christmas time, because everybody wants a nativity scene. Everybody wants little baby Jesus. You know why everybody goes stark raving crazy over nativity scenes and little baby Jesus during that time of the year?

Who is afraid of a baby? Nobody. A lot of people will wear necklaces with Christ on a cross. Who is afraid of a dead Christ? Nobody. But begin to proclaim a resurrected, glorified, ascended Lord of lords, God of gods, and King of kings, and people will gnash their teeth against Him. They do not want that. Why? They cannot control Him.

Peter was preaching on the day of Pentecost, and this is really what got those people. In Acts 2:34-36, he said, "For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool. Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ."

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

What had they heard? They had heard, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ." That was the problem. Jesus Christ had been delivered into their hand, and, if you read the book of Luke, the Bible says they did unto Him as they willed. What did they will? They mocked Him, ridiculed Him, crucified Him, and put Him to death.

Now, all of a sudden, Peter is preaching a resurrected, glorified Lord who is seated at the right hand of God. And they say, "Men and brethren, what are we going to do? He was in our hands, and look what we did to Him. Now He's resurrected and glorified. We're in His hands. What's He going to do to us?" You can't control a resurrected, glorified Lord. You might not be afraid of a little baby, and you might not be afraid of a dead Christ, but Christ is not a baby, and Christ is not dead. He came as the Lamb, but He's coming back as the Lion. He's the resurrected, glorified Son of God.

Psalm 110, verse 1 says, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." That one

verse is quoted over and over so many times in the New Testament. In Ephesians 1:20, we read, “Which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.” Hebrews 1:8 says, “But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.”

Zechariah 9:9 says, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.” Read about that in Matthew and in Luke. But watch verse 10: “And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and His dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” Why? Because of His position.

He is seated at the right hand of God. Do you know what our Lord said in Matthew 28 and verse 18? “All power” or “all authority in heaven and in earth is given unto Me.” He is the conqueror. He cannot fail but to conquer. He is the Son of God, and He is seated at the throne of God. All power is in His hand. Thirdly, I want you to consider with me His purchase. Our Lord, according to the Scripture, purchased a people. I want you to notice this in Isaiah 53, and I want you to see particularly what is said in light of His purchase. Isaiah 53, and let’s begin reading there with verse 10: “Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him.”

"He hath put Him to grief: when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin," now underline this, "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities." Note, if you would please, in verse 10, the Bible says very plainly, "He shall see His seed." Then, in verse 11, "He shall see of the travail of His soul."

What does that tell you? It tells you all of those for whom our Lord died will be redeemed and purchased. They have been purchased; they will be saved. He will see the travail of His soul. Here is the astounding thing: the Bible says He shall see the travail of His soul

and be satisfied. Can you imagine, for one instant? With all of your sin, wickedness, rebellion, and ungodliness, yet in His grace and mercy, He saved you. When you are finally in His presence, He will be satisfied with you.

How can we satisfy the heart of God? Yet the Scripture says, "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Our Lord's prayers are always answered. In His high-priestly prayer in John 17:1, He said, "Father, I thank Thee." In His prayer request, in John 17:24, He said, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world." He asked that all those whom the Father had given Him might be with Him.

I can assure you, based upon the person, position, and purchase of Jesus Christ, He shall see the travail of His soul, and He shall be satisfied. Because He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods, we can hang our hope not only on the promise of the Sovereign, but on the person of the Savior.

The Power of the Scriptures

The third thing on which we hang our hope is the power of the Scriptures. Isaiah 55:8–11 says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

God's Word is like Himself: it is invincible. No one and nothing can stop it. God will always accomplish His will, and His Word will always prosper in that whereto He sends it. Politicians cannot contain it. Governments cannot destroy it. Persecution cannot hinder it. The wicked cannot succeed against it. Ignorance, apathy, and complacency cannot change it.

If every demon out of hell, the devil himself, and every wicked man that has ever lived, is living, or shall ever live were to unite in rebellion against God, it would not change God, move God, or upset God one bit. They could avail absolutely nothing, because His Word is sure.

Psalm 119:89 says, "For ever, O Lord, Thy word is settled in heaven." Our Lord said in Matthew 5:18, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." Psalm 138:2 declares, "For Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name."

If God's Word ever fails, then God ceases to be God. His Word cannot fail, because God is God. Psalm 46:10 says, "Be still, and know that I am God," and continues, "I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth." There is coming a time in history when God will be exalted among the heathen and exalted in the earth.

In Malachi chapter 1 and verse 11, the Word of God says it like this: “For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto My name, and a pure offering: for My name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts.” My name shall be great among the heathen. What do we have? We have the promises of God. We have the person of the Savior, but we have the power of Scripture.

I want to encourage you to use the Word of God. You never understand the power of God’s Word until you see it applied by the Holy Spirit. Suppose I happen to be a soldier back in Vietnam. I was not in Vietnam, thankfully, but suppose I was. I had an AR-15 in my lap, and here comes a Viet Cong, or a group of them. They look at me, start laughing, and point to that AR-15, saying, “That is a piece of junk. That is the sorriest weapon ever produced by the United States of America. We’re not the least bit afraid of that thing. It’s the worst piece of machinery we’ve ever seen.”

I’m not going to stand up, hold the AR up, and say, “Let me tell you something. This is mil-spec. This thing has been milled to the nth degree. It’s been made by the finest armorers.” I’m not going to

do that. All I'm going to do is point it at them and press the trigger. They'll find out soon enough whether it works or not, whether it's real or not.

You don't have to stand up and say, "I'm defending Scripture," right? No, no, no. You just quote it. God will use it, because it's His Word. No one can destroy it. You never back up, never back down, and never sway away from the absolute power, authority, and simplicity of the Word of God. It is indeed the power of God to everyone that believes. What is my hope? I can look around and say, "We're in such deep trouble in this country," and we are. We can laugh about it, but we know we're in it up to our eyeballs.

Conclusion: Our Hope and Application

How can we hope to get out of this mess when it is going to get worse? By the promise of the Sovereign, the person of the Savior, and the power of Scripture. How do we know that we will ultimately prevail, prosper, overcome, and dominate? The only way is by the promise of the Sovereign, the person of the Savior, and the power of Scripture.

It was the preaching of the Word of God under the influence and power of the Holy Ghost that brought great personal, societal, governmental, and cultural changes in this country in times past. The same preaching will bring those changes today in our culture, society, and government. It must be done by the Word of God and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Our hope is in God alone. The Puritan hope is our hope because theirs was a biblical, Christ-honoring, and God-exalting hope. Our God cannot fail: "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6). If God ever failed, He would cease to be God, for He would not be perfect or omnipotent. He said, "I'm the Lord. Beside Me, there is none else. I am God. I know not of any others."

Our hope is bound up in our sovereign God, our Savior, and our Scriptures. We have the pure, unadulterated Word of God, and we need the power of God to apply it in our lives, giving us courage and boldness to put it into practice in our families, workplaces, society, culture, and government.

There is victory in Jesus Christ. That is why, in the Book of Revelation, He comes back on the great white horse, a crown is given to Him, and He goes forth conquering. He conquers all. As Paul said in Romans 8:37, "Yea, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us." Do not give in, give up, or back down. Stay the course and remain faithful to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Father, in Thy name we bow. We thank You for Your love, grace, mercy, goodness, and kindness. We thank You that there is victory in Jesus Christ. He is God of gods, Lord of lords, and King of kings. He is the Sovereign. We bow before Him, worship Him, and acknowledge Him. We pray that You would enable us to apply Thy Word to our lives and give us victory in time and history. In Jesus Christ's name. Amen.

CHAPTER 4

The Puritan Hope: A Reformed Expectation For Success

Introduction: The Need for an Eschatology of Victory

It is good to see each one here tonight. I am certainly thankful that the Lord spared each of us and let us meet back and assemble together to worship His name.

I have been asked to deal with the Puritan hope and eschatology of victory. Romans 15:13 says, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.” God is called the God of hope. We are to abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit. Notice also Colossians 1:23: “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister.” Interestingly enough, in this passage he talks about the hope of the gospel.

It is not my intent tonight to deal with these two particular passages, nor is it my intent to deal with particular views on eschatology. It is my intent, by the grace of God, to expound upon our hope in the gospel and our hope in God. When you think about eschatology, you have to admit and remember that good, godly, and great men have disagreed on that subject, especially in relationship to the return of Christ, for many, many years. I do not think I could settle that issue tonight, especially in one particular message. In fact, I am probably pretty sure that it will probably never even be settled again until Christ actually comes back. Then, of course, everyone will understand at that particular time.

But it is my intent to try to demonstrate, not only from history but also from Scripture, that there is indeed an eschatology of victory. You must understand that Christians do not need to be a defeatist people, a discouraged people, or a distressed people with a detrimental attitude, especially in the areas of the return of Christ and also in the success of the gospel. When we talk about the Puritans, we have to understand that in their day and age they were optimistic.

It seems as if today we have gone from optimism to pessimism. We have denied victory and embraced defeat. We seem somehow to masochistically enjoy being ruled over, dominated, and subjugated by the wicked. In fact, the usual hope, or the average expectation, of the Christian today is one of flight or rescue instead of conquering for Christ and exercising biblical dominion.

Eschatology Affects Christian Living

When it comes to eschatology, you have to understand that our view of eschatology does indeed affect our lives. It determines how we act, how we live, how we respond. If we are to remain faithful in every venue—cultural, domestic, financial, religious, evangelistic—we need to understand that our Lord is absolutely victorious. He has already won. He is the victor.

He is not the loser. Since He is our head and we are His body, we are victorious in the Lord Jesus Christ as well. Professor John Murray said, “The more great and glorious things you expect from God—as the downfall of Antichrist, the conversion of the Jews, the

conquest of the nations to Christ, the breaking of all yokes, the new Jerusalem's coming down from heaven above, the extraordinary pouring out of the Spirit, and a more general union among all the saints—the more holy, yea, the more eminently holy in all your ways and actings it becomes you to be."

Isn't that interesting? He is saying that if you have an eschatology of victory, you ought to be more and more holy, more and more godly, more and more conformed to the image of Jesus Christ. The Bible says plainly in 1 John 3:3, "He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." It does matter what you believe concerning eschatology. Your eschatology affects how you live, how you witness, how you act, and how you respond.

Dr. J. Vernon McGee said many years ago that you don't polish brass on a sinking ship. He meant that this world is going down, and what we need to do is snatch anybody and everybody out that we could possibly snatch out. I have two problems with that statement. First, this world is not a ship. Second, this world may be populated with evil and wicked men, but the world is not going down with the wicked.

Biblical Basis for Earth's Renewal, Not Destruction

Romans 8:19 declares, "For the earnest expectation of the creature"—or the creation—"waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God."

The Word of God says that the earnest expectation of this creation, this world, is waiting for the manifestation of the sons of God. "For the creature"—or the creation—"was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope." "Because the creature"—or the creation—"itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now."

In other words, the entire creation is going to be delivered from the bondage and corruption that is in it unto the glorious liberty of the children of God. Now, if God is going to deliver the creation, how can the creation sink and go down? Obviously, it cannot.

In 2 Peter 3, Peter speaks about this world being purified with fire: “Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved”—or loosed—“and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. Nevertheless we, according to his promise”—notice that, according to his promise—“look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.” Thus, we look for a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

In Isaiah 66:22, our Lord speaks again about the new heavens and the new earth: “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the LORD, so shall your seed and your name remain.” Even in Isaiah, God is speaking about a new heaven and a new earth.

Of course, Revelation 21:1 says, “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea.” John also speaks of the New Jerusalem coming down. Where would it be coming down to? Probably upon this earth. He says, “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”

If you put all these passages together—and there are plenty more—I think you can see that the earth is not forsaken, given up, or destroyed. Rather, it is purified, made new, and set free from the bondage of sin and from the curse. In light of that, we had probably better begin obeying our Lord when He said, “Occupy till I come,” or “Do business till I come.”

The Puritan Vision of Gradual Kingdom Growth

One author said it like this: “The entire Puritan experiment in America was aimed at creating a city set on a hill for all the world to see—a model republic based on biblical law and Christian charity for the whole world to emulate. The Puritans also believed in the concept of patient gradualism. They understood they might not live to see the fruit of the field that they had planted. They understood the kingdom of heaven as being progressive and having a gradual growth, as a stone cut without hands, which becomes a great mountain and fills the earth. The kingdom of heaven was to attain

universal dominion, but through slow degrees and with gradual progress. The Puritans understood that the Messiah would be gradually magnified until he became the omnipotent ruler of the world. Thus the battle cry of the Reformation, 'No king but Christ,' would become a temporal reality." No king but Christ.

The Savoy Declaration's Victorious Eschatology

The earliest declaration that actually talked about a victorious eschatology was the Savoy Declaration of 1658. Here is the one paragraph: "As the Lord in his care and love towards his church, hath in his infinite wise providence exercised it with a great variety in all ages, for the good of them that love him and his own glory; so according to his promise, we expect in the latter days, Antichrist being destroyed, the Jews called, and the adversaries of the kingdom of his dear Son broken, the churches of Christ being enlarged and edified through a free and plentiful communication of light and grace, shall enjoy in this world a more quiet, peaceable, and glorious condition than they have enjoyed." Thus, in 1658, here was an eschatology of victory.

Instead of simply quoting the Puritans, I want to present a number of passages that undeniably teach that our God is omnipotent, victorious, and has absolute dominion. The Puritans were well aware of these passages; they understood them and believed them very firmly and fully. After I show you these passages, I want to summarize everything under three points and show you three truths on which you and I can hang our hats and our hopes, saying, This is our hope for victory.

Although I am talking about victory right now, I understand that we are living in a day and age of apostasy, lukewarmness, and apathy. I understand that we are living in a day and age when Christianity is being assaulted on every side. There are many who try to say that Islam is the reigning religion or some cult, and that is not true. But many say that, and certainly Islam is trying to make inroads against Christianity. I understand that.

Living by Faith in God's Sovereign Control

May I remind you of something? As Christians, we do not live by sight, but we live by faith. We can look around and see the deplorable conditions that exist in our world today. We can also understand that things are going wrong. But we have to confess in faith that things are going wrong just right. There are no accidents in a world ruled by a sovereign God; everything flows according to His eternal purpose.

This verse was quoted last night, or yesterday sometime. Psalm 76:10 says, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.” You want to know how much wickedness and how much sin is going to be allowed in this world? Here is the answer: just enough that it will redound to God’s honor and God’s glory. What will not redound to His honor and glory will be restrained.

It will be held back. How can sin glorify God? If there were no sin, we would never know God’s mercy, grace, love, and goodness. Neither would we know God’s holiness and justice. If there were never any sin, we would never know those things. God will allow just enough sin to ultimately redound to His honor and His glory, and the remainder He will certainly restrain.

Contrary to all circumstantial evidence and in opposition to situational observances, Christ is on the throne of His glory, ruling and subduing all things. He is in absolute control, subduing His enemies in His way and His time.

Christ's Present Reign and Subjugation of Enemies

Let me tell you something. The greatest problem that you and I have in relation to this truth is that we want to help Him, and we want to help Him right now. Have you ever understood this principle? His way is not our way, and His time is not our time. Scripture tells us very plainly in 1 Corinthians 15:25, “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.” Christ is reigning now and is putting His enemies under His feet. It may not look that way, but it is still true.

We live by faith, and we do not live by sight. We live by Scripture, not by our own understanding.

Now, you have to consider the impact of a number of passages. I want to show you these passages. Turn in your Bibles to Isaiah chapter 2. Your pastor read that passage, but that is fine; I want to read it again because I am going to emphasize several things. Look in Isaiah chapter 2. Let us begin there with verse 1. Isaiah chapter 2 and verse 1. Notice the Bible says, "The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem."

Old Testament Prophecies of Universal Dominion

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house"—and, by the way, mountains usually signify kingdoms—"shall be established in the top of the mountains"—or the other kingdoms—"and shall be exalted above the hills"—or the smaller kingdoms. Notice, "and all nations shall flow unto it." Not only are all the nations flowing unto it, but verse 3 says, "And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. And he shall judge among the nations, and shall rebuke many people: and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more."

So in this passage, then, the Word of God speaks of nations coming to Christ, submitting to His law, and living obediently. It is not speaking about eternity. It is speaking about time in history. His law is to be the absolute authority, and all nations will have to submit to it.

Now turn in your Bibles, if you would, to the book of Daniel, chapter 7. Let us begin reading there with verse 13. Look, if you would, please, at verse 13. Daniel 7 and verse 13. Here it is. Listen carefully.

Daniel saw "one like the Son of man" coming with the clouds of heaven to the Ancient of days—the Lord Jesus Christ coming to the

Father. “And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom,” so “that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” There is a kingdom given to the Lord Jesus Christ, and that kingdom shall never be destroyed. Moreover, all people, nations, and languages should serve Him.

Daniel 7:27 says, “And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.” The saints, then, are involved in this kingdom as well.

These truths should encourage us in evangelism, witnessing, and proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Why? Because He is the absolute victor. He is God of gods and King of kings and Lord of lords. This truth gave rise to the great missionary movements in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It also motivated the Apostle Paul. In 2 Timothy 2:10 he said, “Therefore I endure all things for the elect's sakes, that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.”

Why was Paul beaten? Why was he imprisoned? Why was he stoned? He said, “I endure all these things for the elect's sakes.” Paul understood that our Lord had a people and a kingdom. He also understood that, in His time and in His way, those people were going to be called into that kingdom.

The Kingdom's Present and Future Reality

In other words, our Lord was going to be absolutely and totally victorious. The kingdom has come because the King has come. The kingdom is here because the King is here, but it is coming more fully when the Lord returns, when there will be a fuller, more complete, and final manifestation of it.

The Promise of the Sovereign

The truth of the matter is this: if we wish to see the increase of His kingdom, if we wish to see His people brought into His kingdom, we

must preach and pray as He has ordained. I want to give you three very important truths that are the guarantee of victory. They are simple, and yet at the same time, they should be deeply encouraging.

Three Guarantees of Victory: Promise, Person, Power

What are we to hang our hopes on? We are hanging our hopes on the same exact principle—or principles, I should say—that the Puritans hung their hopes upon. What are they? Let me give you three. First of all, the promise of the Sovereign. We are talking about the promise of the Sovereign now.

God says, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem."

Can it possibly be true that the Lord's kingdom is superior and shall be superior to all other kingdoms? Can it also be true that all people are going to flow into it exactly as He said? If so, how in the world can these things be true? The answer is this: God's kingdom is superior to all the other kingdoms because He is the Great I Am. He is the Sovereign of the Universe. Yes, it shall come to pass because of the absolute power of God. He is omnipotent.

We must understand that the faithfulness of God, as well as the power of God, are intricately and intimately connected to His promises. We could say it like this: The very Godhood of God is at stake. If God's promises ever fail, then God would cease to be God. It is impossible for God to lie, and it is impossible for God to fail. If God ever ceases to have the power to accomplish His will, He will cease to be God. Obviously, God is omnipotent; He is not going to fail in that power. When God gives His word, His power sustains that word.

Have you ever stopped to think about this? There are three things that will stop a man from keeping his word. I could look at Brother

Jim Nelson and say, "I'll be at your house tomorrow at 8 o'clock sharp." He might ask, "Do I have your word on that?" I would say, "Yes, you have my word on that." Yet there are three things that could stop me.

First, I may not have the foresight to envision all the complications and problems connected with my word. I could get up in order to go, but my car might have a dead battery, or I might have four flat tires. I did not have the foresight to see those problems. Second, I may not have the necessary power to accomplish my word. I could wake up in the morning with a virus and simply be unable to move or go.

You say things do not happen like that. Oh, yes, they do. I can assure you they happen like that. I found out what it means to have two good hands. I taught a class on Friday and Saturday with absolutely no problem, no pain, and no difficulty. I woke up Sunday morning ready to preach, and I could not even use my left hand. It was totally dead and useless. A nerve in my neck had been totally encapsulated by bone. There had not been the first bit of pain, but I woke up unable to use my hand. At times, we simply do not have the power to fulfill our word.

The third thing that will stop us is that sometimes we may not have the character necessary to carry out our word. I may not have car trouble or physical problems; I might simply say, "I'm not going over there." That is a lack of character. When you think of God, God does not have those problems. God is omniscient; He knows everything. Moreover, God is omnipotent; He is all-powerful.

Thirdly, He is infinitely holy and faithful and wise. He cannot deny Himself. Hebrews 6:16–20 says, “For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.”

The two immutable things are these: it is impossible for God to lie, and it is impossible for God to change. God is not going to change in His person, and God is not going to change in His counsel. He cannot change for the worst because He is perfect, and He cannot change for the better because He is already perfect. If you get better, you were not perfect before; and if you lose something, you cannot be perfect. He cannot change. He is immutable. He has no need to change because He is the most perfect being, and He has no need to change His counsel because Acts 15:18 tells us, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning.”

God knew the end from the beginning because God ordained and predestinated everything from the beginning. Ephesians 3:11 speaks of “the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord” before the world began. In systematic theology, one usually finds a section on the decrees of God. Yet when you go through Scripture, there is only one decree and only one purpose. We speak of the decrees of God because you and I have to think successively. We cannot think of everything at one time; we think this, and then we think that, and then we think this.

We do it in succession. But to the infinite mind, God only had to have one thought or one purpose which entailed and included absolutely everything. We are talking about that eternal purpose, which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord before the world ever began. God said in Isaiah 46:10, “My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure.” Of course, God can do that because His word is “I AM THAT I AM.” That is who God is.

He is the very essence of faithfulness. Do you know why you did not die in your sleep last night, or why you have been enabled by God to live through this day? “It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning.” “Great is thy faithfulness.” Deuteronomy 7:9 says, “Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.”

If we ask who the two greatest enemies of God's people in the Old Testament were, we would immediately think of Egypt and Assyria. The two leading enemies of God's people have historically been

Egypt and Assyria. Yet, in light of their enmity, it appears that God will include them among the nations that flow unto Him in His law and worship. Isaiah 19:18 begins with an astounding statement: “In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction. In that day shall there be an altar to the LORD in the midst of the land of Egypt, and a pillar at the border thereof to the LORD. And it shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt: for they shall cry unto the LORD because of the oppressors, and he shall send them a saviour, and a great one, and he shall deliver them. And the LORD shall be known to Egypt, and the Egyptians shall know the LORD in that day, and shall do sacrifice and oblation;”

“Yea, they shall vow a vow unto the LORD, and perform it. And the LORD shall smite Egypt: he shall smite and heal it: and they shall return even to the LORD, and he shall be intreated of them, and shall heal them.”

“In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: whom the LORD of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.” Isn’t that amazing?

Go back to verse 18: “In that day shall five cities in the land of Egypt speak the language of Canaan, and swear to the LORD of hosts; one shall be called, The city of destruction.” In other words, God is saying that five-sixths of the land would bow to Him and worship Him. Egypt and Assyria—the notable enemies of God’s people and of God Himself.

I have preached for over fifty years. I do not know how many Bibles I have been through or how many I have worn out, but in one of my old Bibles I have dates written beside one verse. That verse is Psalm 68:31. Every time it spoke to my heart, I would pencil in the date. “Princes shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands unto God.”

We must conclude that God's elect—His people—are scattered everywhere, and He will bring them to Himself just as He promised. We may rely upon His promises. When God says that He will redeem His people, whoever they are and wherever they are, we may rest upon that. He shall do so. He shall convert them, ensure that they hear the gospel message, give them repentance and faith, and bring them to Himself.

The first truth upon which we can hang our hope is the promises of the Sovereign. He has given us these great and glorious promises, and we need to meditate upon them, think about them, and see how extensive they really are. The second principle is not only the promise of the Sovereign, but the person of the Savior. First Timothy 3:16 says, "And without controversy"—there can be no argument over this—"great is the mystery of godliness:"

The Person of the Savior

"God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory." Now listen to what he said: "And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh."

Under this, I want you to listen to three things. First of all, we must consider the person of the Savior. He is God manifest in the flesh. He is the God-man—perfect God and perfect man, one person with two natures. Consequently, He is the only mediator between God and men. First Timothy 2:5 tells us, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus."

The Scripture speaks concerning Christ in Colossians 1. The Bible talks about God the Father, "who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: in whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins." So we are talking about Jesus Christ. The Bible says, "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: for by him"—that is, by Jesus Christ—"were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before

all things, and by him all things consist," or have their being, or are held together. He is the image of the invisible God.

What did He say to Thomas? "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." He is God. He is the Creator.

First Timothy 6:14 says that Timothy should keep the commandment "without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ," who "in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting." Note that Jesus Christ is the only Potentate, and King of kings, and Lord of lords.

Years ago, I was invited by another pastor to go with him to a gun show in Albany, Georgia. When we arrived, we found that the gun show was in the Shriner's Temple. Since we were there, we walked up to it and saw a parking spot roped off with a little sign: it was reserved for the potentate. I said to my pastor friend, "Isn't this wonderful? They have a parking spot here for Jesus Christ. He's the only potentate that I know."

That's what the Scripture says. He is the only potentate. He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods. As the Son of God, He is the creator, the controller, the inheritor, and the Lord of all. Look in your Bibles to Psalm 2. I love this Psalm; I wish I had time to preach from this passage tonight.

Psalm 2, verse 1: "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us." We do not like the limitations that God has placed upon us or His boundaries. The Bible says in verse 4, "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure."

Look what God decrees: "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee." Then: "Ask of me, and I

shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."

Do you realize that all Jesus Christ has to do is ask the Father? God said, "I'll give it to you. You're Lord of lords and King of kings. You are my King. I've set you on the hill of Zion." It does not matter that the kings of the earth are in rebellion against Him, or that they hate and despise Him. In light of all that rebellion, God said, "I've set my King there." And that's exactly where He is going to be. He is not going away or disappearing. No. He is King of kings and Lord of lords and God of gods.

Secondly, you have to remember His position. I get tickled, and I get angry, especially around Christmastime, for the same reason. Everywhere you go, you see little baby Jesus in a manger. You know why the world loves Christmas and baby Jesus? Who's afraid of a baby?

But let me tell you something. Jesus Christ is not a baby any longer. Jesus Christ is not hanging on a cross any longer. Jesus Christ is the risen, resurrected, glorified Son of God. He is seated at the right hand of God the Father, and all power in heaven and earth is given unto Him. One of the most frequently quoted verses from the Old Testament in the New Testament is Psalm 110:1: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The Bible says in Ephesians 1:20, "Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." In Hebrews 1:8, "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom." Jesus Christ is a resurrected, ascended Lord of glory.

Do you remember that passage in Acts chapter 2? The Apostle Peter was preaching the risen, resurrected Jesus Christ. After he preached Christ's resurrection and that He was seated at the right hand of God, they said, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?"

Why were they so concerned and upset? When Jesus Christ was in a state of humility, or humiliation, they spat upon Him, slapped Him, crowned Him with thorns, mocked Him, and crucified Him. They had Him in their hands and did with Him as they pleased. But

now Peter was saying that the same resurrected, risen, glorified, exalted Son was at the right hand of God the Father. All of a sudden they realized that they were in His hands, and He may do with them as He pleases.

You had better consider His position. Look in Zechariah, chapter 9 and verse 9. Here it is: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem:

The Savior's Purchase

"Behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth." Remember not just the person of Christ, but His position. He has already conquered. He is the conqueror. He cannot fail.

He is the eternal, immutable, immortal Son of God, seated at the right hand of God. He has all authority in heaven and earth, and everyone is in His hand.

Isaiah 53:10 says, "Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin." Then it declares, "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Verse 11 adds, "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities."

Do you realize that Jesus Christ shall see everyone for whom He died? He will see His seed; He will see His people. He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.

Stop and think that the sovereign God of heaven and earth will be satisfied with poor, wicked, wretched, reprobate sinners like you and me who have been saved by His infinite, wonderful grace. How could I satisfy the heart of God? How could you satisfy the heart? But He shall see of the travail of His soul, and He shall be satisfied.

When you get to John 17, the high priestly prayer of our Lord, remember that our Lord's prayers are always answered. He prayed, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

"I will that they shall be with me." Our Lord's purchase. Israel, He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. We must remember the promise of the Sovereign. We must remember the person of the Savior. And one last thing, we must remember the power of the Scriptures.

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it."

The power of the Scriptures. God's Word is like Himself. It is invincible. Nothing can stop it. Nothing can hinder it. It will always accomplish the purpose and the pleasure of God. It will always accomplish what He intends.

We tend to forget that oftentimes we have a ministry of condemnation as well as a ministry of reconciliation. Noah preached 120 years and never had any converts, and yet he is in the heroes of faith. Look at Isaiah. Look at Jeremiah. God's Word said His Word is not going to return to Him void. It will accomplish that whereunto He sends it. You know what we fail to do so many times? We try to defend the Word of God instead of using the Word of God.

What do I mean by that? Well, let's suppose I had a Glock pistol laying up here on the pulpit. You came up to me, and you were my enemy, threatening me and telling me everything you were going to do to me. Then you saw that Glock pistol and said, "That's a sorry piece of trash. That's nothing but aluminum. That's plastic. That's the worst pistol ever made." I'm not going to pick that pistol up and

say, “Let me tell you, this thing is machined out of the finest aluminum available. It’s got the hardest—” No, no, no, no, no. I’m going to take that pistol, point it at you, and start pulling the trigger. You’ll find out soon enough whether or not it works. That’s what we need to do with the Scriptures. We need to point to the Scriptures, pull the chapter and verse with our finger, and say, “Here’s what God says. You wrestle with it. You wrestle it. This is the Word of God.” God’s Word is invincible.

Politicians cannot contain it. Governments cannot destroy it. Persecution cannot hinder it. The wicked cannot succeed against it. Ignorance, apathy, and complacency cannot change it. If every demon out of hell, the devil himself, and every wicked individual who has lived, is living, and shall ever live, united in rebellion against God, it would occasion God no uneasiness and would not change one iota of His Word.

Do you realize that in the hottest persecutions during the first century, we are told in Acts 12:24, “But the word of God grew and multiplied”? And in Acts 19:20, “So mightily grew the word of God and prevailed.” Persecution today is pale and anemic compared with the persecution of the first century and the persecution under the Roman Catholic Church in later years. If the Word of Jesus Christ prevailed during those hot times, and if it grew during the times of the hottest persecution, why is it being hindered today, when persecution is so mild and so anemic?

It is because we do not use it. God said in Psalm 119:89, “For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.” Our Lord said in Matthew 5:18, “Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.” He said in Psalm 138:2, “Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.” If God’s Word ever ceases or fails, God would cease to be God.

He said in Psalm 46:10, “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.” Malachi 1:11 declares, “For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering: for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the LORD of hosts.”

You need never to back up, never back down, and never sway away from the absolute authority, power, and simplicity of the Word of God. God's Word can defend itself; it shall accomplish that whereunto He sends it.

How do we know that we shall prevail? Do you honestly think that Islam is going to wipe out Christianity? Do you think that our ungodly, wicked, reprobate rulers are somehow going to make a law that says, "Christianity is no more"? They can try all they like, but Christianity will not become extinct, nor will we fade away into the twilight. We know this because of the promise of the Sovereign, the person of the Savior, and the power of the Scriptures.

It was the preaching of the Word of God, under the influence and power of the Holy Spirit, that brought to pass the great personal, societal, governmental, and cultural changes of times past. The Puritans believed not simply in personal, individual transformation, but also in the transformation of culture, society, and government by the power of God and His Word. The same God and the same Word that worked such great cultural, governmental, societal, and individual changes in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries are the same God and the same Word that we have today.

Turn in your Bibles to one last passage, Psalm 44. I love this passage. The Puritan hope is a biblical hope, and their hope is our hope because it is a biblical, God-honoring, Christ-exalting hope. Our God shall never fail. "We have heard with our ears, O God. Our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old." Read of all the things God did to the heathen: "How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them"—that is, the people—"how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out." Israel "got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them." Now watch what he says in verse 4: "Thou art my King, O God."

"Command deliverances for Jacob. Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast

put them to shame that hated us. In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever."

Our ears have heard, Lord; we have been told about all these mighty miracles, great works, and wonders that You have done in times past. We understand that our people did not get the land in possession by their own power. It was not their sword or their arm. The only reason they got there was that You were merciful and gracious to them and gave them that land.

"Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob." Here is a good South Georgia translation: "Thou art my King, O God. Do it again. Do it again. You did it in time past. Do it again. Do it again. We will rejoice in thy name and give thee honor and glory and praise. Through thee we will push down our enemies. And through Thee, we will give Thee praise and honor and worship and glory."

We need to fall before our great, sovereign, immutable, unchangeable God and say, "Oh God, do it again. Do it again. Do it again." Hang your hope on the promise of the Sovereign, the person of the Savior, and the power of Scriptures. That is what the Puritans did, and that is what we need.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we ask Your blessing and Your help. Teach us. Encourage us. Help us to understand, Lord, that we are not the losers; we are the winners. We are not the victims; we are the victors. Give us Your grace. Put a fire in our soul. Move us to that mighty victory which You have ordained in and through our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen and Amen.

CHAPTER 5

Victory in Jesus Christ

Introduction: The Unarguable Victory of Christ

In 1 Corinthians 15:24–28, the Bible says: “Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

When you begin to talk about eschatology, you are talking about the doctrine of last things. The Greek word eschatos means last. Eschatology is the doctrine of last things. Therefore, when you discuss judgment and death, the return of Jesus Christ, or the end of the world, you are discussing eschatology.

There are four main views concerning eschatology: historic premillennialism, amillennialism, postmillennialism, and

dispensational premillennialism. Within each of these there are many variations and different positions as well. It is not my intent today to name or delineate the various positions. That statement does not downplay the importance of eschatology. Please understand this clearly: whether an individual is a historic premillennialist, an amillennialist, a postmillennialist, or a dispensational premillennialist, all believe that Jesus Christ is coming back literally, visibly, and bodily. They disagree as to when and how.

Men have argued over eschatology for ages, and that is not going to stop. The only way it will stop is when our Lord does indeed return; then we will find out what the truth really and truly is. When I say that, I am not saying eschatology is unimportant. The truth of the matter is, eschatology is very, very important. Your view of eschatology determines your worldview. It determines how you live now, how you will live, how you will minister now, and how you will minister in the future. You cannot escape a worldview. Anyone who embraces any position in eschatology also embraces a certain worldview. Therefore, you cannot escape the impact your eschatology has upon your worldview.

So whether you are right or whether you are wrong is immaterial. What is right is that your eschatology affects your worldview. This is why I encourage everybody to study the Scriptures for themselves and come to the conclusion as to what the Word of God does indeed teach when it comes to eschatology, and especially the return of Jesus Christ. The truth is, most people believe just what they have been told, what they have been taught, what the preachers say. They hardly ever study for themselves. I know what I was taught as a young man, and I know what I was taught as a young pastor. I came to find out that I was taught wrongly as well. So, I am simply saying, we need to study for ourselves.

Let me point out that, in light of 1 Corinthians 15, I cannot possibly conceive or imagine anyone holding any of those positions disagreeing with anything I am going to say. I am not trying to placate or please any of those positions. I want you to understand that. The only thing I am saying is that what I am going to teach today is absolutely unarguable.

You cannot argue with it because it is nothing but clear, plain Scripture. Since the title of the message is Victory in Jesus Christ, the truth is that Jesus Christ is the victor. He is the conqueror. He has already conquered sin and death. I am going to quote a number of passages in order to save time, though there are a number of Scriptures to which I will want you to turn. First, let me quote Hebrews 2, verses 14 and 15:

Christ the Conqueror

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

So Jesus Christ basically, and I will show you another Scripture later, has already conquered sin and death. Now look in your Bibles to Revelation chapter 6, verse 2. In fact, let us read verse 1 so that you can see it in context: "And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were, the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see. And I saw, and behold, a white horse."

"And he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer." Many people in their eschatology say that Revelation 6:2 refers to the Antichrist. I certainly disagree. I believe that verse is speaking of none other than the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, because Scripture is consistent in its teaching.

In Revelation 19:11 we read, "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse." The one sitting upon him "was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

"And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS." In Revelation 19, then, it is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself on the white horse. The one in chapter 6 went forth conquering and to conquer.

Revelation 11:15 says, "And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever." So obviously, clearly, Jesus Christ is the victor. How in the world could He not be the victor, when Matthew 28:18 tells us that all authority, all power in heaven and earth, is given unto Him?

Moreover, everything has been put under His feet. We read that in 1 Corinthians 15. Ephesians 1:20–23 says that God raised Christ from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come," and "hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." The Bible again says that everything has been put under the feet of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:16–18 also reminds us that Jesus Christ is the Creator of all things: "All things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." That is, they have their being. "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence." It is unarguable from Scripture that Jesus Christ is plainly stated to be the victor and the conqueror.

The Consummation of the Mediatorial Kingdom

Now return to 1 Corinthians 15, because there are three things to observe in this short passage. First, observe a consummation. Verse 24 says, "Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power." Then cometh the end.

But the important question is this: the end of what? Is he talking about the end of the world? In one sense, I suppose you could say yes; but in context, when he says, “then cometh the end,” he is referring to the end of the mediatorial kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Our Lord has an essential kingdom in and of Himself by virtue of the fact that He is God. He also has a mediatorial kingdom, in the sense that God has ordained Him to be the mediator, the go-between between God and man. First Timothy 2:5 says, “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.”

Isaiah chapter 9, verse 6, is a passage most people can quote, or at least are certainly aware of, by virtue of the fact that it is usually quoted around Christmas time every year. But look at it very plainly: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." Now watch verse 7: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Note that the Bible says there shall be no end upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it and to establish it.

Daniel 7, verses 13 and 14, says, "I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed."

So, when we are saying that there is an essential kingdom that will never pass away, that will never be destroyed, when you look in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 24, it certainly is not talking about his essential kingdom, but it is talking about his mediatorial kingdom.

By the way, the Greek word for "end" there is the word telos, which literally means, properly, a termination, a limit, the completion of anything. So when our Lord's mediatorial kingdom is

completed, when it comes to its end, that is exactly what it is talking about. Think about it like this: there will be no longer any need for His mediatorial work when He presents us faultless and blameless to the Father.

Jude 24 and 25 declare: “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.” But note he is able to keep us from falling and to present us faultless before the presence of our Heavenly Father. So actually what you are talking about when you look in 1 Corinthians 15 and verse 24, “then cometh the end,” that is the end of the mediatorial kingdom of Christ when he delivers that back into the Father. May I remind you that the kingdom has always belonged to the Father.

In Luke chapter 11, the disciples came to our Lord and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples." He said, "When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done." In other words, the kingdom has always belonged to the Father.

Jamieson, Fausset, Brown says: "His giving up of the mediatorial kingdom to the Father, for the end for which the mediatorial economy was established has been accomplished, is altogether in harmony with its continuing everlastingly, that is, his essential kingdom. The change which shall then take place shall be in the manner of administration, not in the kingdom itself."

It continues: "God shall then come into direct connection with the earth, instead of mediatorially, when Christ shall have fully and finally removed everything that severs asunder the holy God and a sinful earth. The glory of God is the final end of Christ's mediatorial office. His co-equality with the Father is independent of the latter and prior to it, and shall therefore continue when its function shall have ceased. His manhood, too, shall everlastingly continue, though it is now subordinate to the Father. The throne of the Lamb but no longer mediatorial, as well as of God, shall be in the heavenly city."

God the Lamb and God the Father are seated upon the same throne. But when it says, "then cometh the end," it is the end of that

mediatorial kingdom, because the end of that kingdom is actually the honor and the glory of God.

The Continuation of Christ's Reign

When will that occur? When he shall have put down all rule and all authority and all power. He will put down all rule, referring to all rulers; any and all authority, whether delegated or usurped; and lawful or unlawful power. Everything will be put down. Why? Because Jesus Christ is the victor and the conqueror. He shall completely, totally, and fully conquer any and everything.

The Greek word for “put down” here literally means to be done away with, or to be brought to naught. It does not matter who opposes our Lord, whether satanic, humanistic, or whatever it is: it is going to be put down. When Jesus Christ has fully and finally removed everything that severs asunder a holy God and the sinful earth, and has absolutely secured the safety of the saints, presenting them faultless before His Father, then He is going to render up to the Father His mediatorial kingdom, because the glory of God is the final end of that mediatorial kingdom. He is going to give back to the Father that which the Father gave Him.

You remember that earlier I quoted Matthew 28:18, where He said, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.” Our Lord is going to turn around and give that back to the Father.

When you look at verse 24, “then cometh the end,” it is a consummation that is being referred to, but it is the consummation of His mediatorial kingdom. Now look at verses 25 and 26. Although it is speaking about consummation, that consummation has not yet happened. Until it does happen, there is a continuation: “For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.”

Several principles and truths are clearly delineated in these two verses. The first is this: our Lord is reigning right now. He is on His throne. The Bible says, “For he must reign.” You may say, “Well, I don’t understand. I don’t see.” The truth is, He is reigning because the Scripture says He is. His rule may be more clearly manifested to

us in eternity, but He is ruling and reigning right now. We may not observe it, see it, grasp it, or understand it, but it is still true.

The second truth is that He is not only reigning now; He is also subduing His enemies now.

When you think about that, you look around and see how wicked the world is and how antagonistic everyone is to Jesus Christ and to the Word of God. You think, "How can He be subduing His enemies right now? It seems as if there is an open revolt. It is getting worse and worse and worse." Well, the problem is that we walk by sight and not by faith. We want things to happen our way and in our time.

I have often said, "I'm more than willing to help Him. I would like to help Him. I'd like to offer Him my help." But the truth of the matter is, He does not need my help. He is going to subdue all His enemies in His way, in His time.

Here are two things: He is reigning now, and He is subduing His enemies now. Turn to Hebrews chapter 2, while holding 1 Corinthians 15, and look at verse 6. Here is a quote from Psalm 8: "But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?" We are talking about man in general, but now we are going to get the man specific, the Lord Jesus. Verse 7 says, "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not yet all things put under him."

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man." In other words, we see Him crucified, resurrected, ascended, and seated at the right hand of God. But we are not observing how He is subduing all His enemies right now. We do not see it, grasp it, or hold on to it. Nevertheless, He is reigning and subduing His enemies now.

But He is doing so. Ruling and subduing go together; you cannot have one without the other. If Jesus Christ is ruling, He is subduing. If Jesus Christ is reigning, He is indeed bringing His enemies under

His feet. We may not be able to observe it right now, but it is nonetheless true. You cannot have one without the other.

Psalm 2 presents a question in verse 1, followed by a statement in verses 2 and 3 that shows where everyone is today. Look in your Bibles to Psalm 2. I want you to see this Psalm, and then we are going to go to another Psalm in light of it. The question is, “Why do the heathen rage?”

“And the people imagine a vain thing,” that is, something useless and worthless. Here is what is happening, and here is what is useless and worthless: “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.”

Here is what the kings, the rulers of the earth, the politicians, and all these people are saying: “We don't like the limitations that God has placed upon us. We don't like His rules. We don't like His commandments. Let's break those bands. Let's burst those cords. Let's do what we want to do.” Look in verse 4.

But “He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.” In light of all this rebellion, He says, “Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.”

Here is what God will do to these rebellious rulers: “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.” So, in light of this, here is the counsel: “Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.”

"Blessed are all they that put their trust in him." The Father has placed His Son upon the throne. The heathen may rage and do everything they can to overthrow the Lord Jesus Christ, thwart His

rule and reign, and resist His subjugation of all things, but it is impossible. God said, "Yet have I set my Son, my King, upon my holy hill," and He will break you with a rod of iron, and like a potter breaks a potter's vessel, if you do not yield to him.

That's why I said, "Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, kiss the Son, bow to him, that ye be not destroyed."

Psalm 110 contains only seven verses, and they say, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool. The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries. He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head."

Now go back to verse one: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Psalm 110 verse one is the most frequent and most often quoted Old Testament verse in the New Testament. This verse is quoted more times in the New Testament than any other Old Testament verse.

SCRIPTURE READING - Matthew 22:44; Mark 12:36; Luke 20:42-43; Acts 2:34-35; Hebrews 1:13; Hebrews 10:12-13; Psalm 110 (KJV)

Matthew 22 verse 44: "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Mark 12 verse 36: "For David himself said by the Holy Ghost, The LORD said to my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Luke 20, verses 42 and 43: "And David himself saith in the book of Psalms, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool."

Acts 2, verses 34 and 35: "For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thy foes thy footstool."

> Hebrews 1 in verse 13: "But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?"
>
> Hebrews 10 verses 12 through 13: "But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool."
>
> Both of these Psalms show us and teach us that the Father has established the Son's throne. He has given Him a throne that heathen may rage, that enemies may fight, but it's to no avail. If all the enemies of God in heaven and earth and hell and under the earth or wherever they are, if they all join hands together in rebellion against God, it would occasion God no uneasiness. He said, in spite of all of this, "Yet have I set my Son upon my holy hill."

Jesus Christ is ruling, and Jesus Christ is reigning, and therefore Jesus Christ is subduing. We may not see it, but it is the absolute truth.

The Destruction of Death

We just read in 1 Corinthians 15 where he said, “The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.” Now, in one sense of the word, death has already been destroyed. How can I say that? You remember I quoted earlier, Hebrews 2, verses 14 and 15. The Bible says that through death Christ might “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

But I want you to look at something. Look in 2 Timothy chapter 1 and verse 10: “But is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” Jesus Christ has abolished death. Of course He has. Of course He has.

You remember that passage in John 11 where Lazarus had died. When our Lord heard that he was sick, He remained where He was. Finally, Jesus got up and said to His disciples, “Let us arise that we may go and awake Lazarus where he's sleeping.” They said, “Lord, if

he sleeps, he does well." No, the Lord said, "You don't understand, I'm speaking the fact that Lazarus is dead."

When Jesus arrived, Martha, the sister, ran out and said, "Master, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." Jesus Christ said to her, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?" Martha answered, "Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God." She really did not answer the question. Then she went and called Mary. Mary came and said, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died."

When they brought Jesus Christ to the tomb, the shortest verse in the Bible says, "Jesus wept." Then, with a loud voice, He said, "Lazarus, come forth." The man bound with grave clothes came forth, and Jesus said, "Loose him, and let him go." Martha did not comprehend that the resurrection had just walked into town, because where Jesus Christ is, there is life.

You and I talk about dying. The older we get, the more it is on our mind because we recognize that we are going to shed this body. But the truth of the matter is, we, as believers, really do not die. We drop this body, that is for sure.

There is a big tree out front. If I go and stand in the shade of that tree, am I in the tree? No, I am in the shadow; I am not in the tree. What did David say? "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." Because for the child of God, our Lord has already taken the sting out of death, and we really do not die, because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. So our Lord has abolished death.

When you get to Revelation chapter 21, verse 4, the Bible says, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." So there will not even be the experience of dropping the body and being absent from the body to be present with the Lord. It will all be over.

The Completion: God All in All

There is a consummation, when He finally and fully completes His mediatorial kingdom. Until then, there is a continuation because He is continually reigning and subduing His enemies. Ultimately, there will be a completion. In 1 Corinthians 15:27–28, "For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all." All things have been placed under the feet of Jesus Christ, with the exception of God the Father.

John Gill said, “God the Father, who made all things subject to Christ as mediator, is himself not subjected to him, since his power as such must be greater than his. This exception is made to secure the government, power, and honor of the Father. For though he has made his firstborn higher than the kings of the earth, yet not higher than himself. And though he set him his king over his holy hill of Zion, yet not over himself. And though it is his will that all men should honor the Son as they honor the Father, yet not above him or more than he, nor has he quitted the government either in this world or in the church by subjecting all things to Christ. And this exception is also made to confirm the universal power and empire of Christ. For an exception to a general rule does but the more establish it. And since the Father is only excepted, it is a clear case that He has left nothing that is not put under Him. But it must be observed that though the Holy Spirit is not mentioned, yet He is equally excepted since He is the One but one God with the Father, and was jointly concerned in the mission, unction, and installation of Christ as Mediator. Nor can he be reckoned among all the things put in subjection to Christ, for they regard only creatures and many of these enemies, which neither of which the Spirit of God can be numbered. And though the gifts and graces of the Spirit are put in Christ's hands and are at his disposal, yet the person of the Spirit can never be brought to be put under his feet.”

So what Gill is saying is this: everything is put under the feet of Jesus Christ, with the exception of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

Because there is one God who has manifested Himself in three persons, listen to what Calvin said: “He insists upon two things. First, that all things must be brought under subjection to Christ before He restores to the Father the dominion of the world, and secondly, that the Father is given all things into the hands of the Son in such a way as to retain the principal right in His own hands. From the former then it follows that the hour of the last judgment is not yet come. From the second, that Christ is now the medium between us and the Father, in such a way as to bring us at length to Him. Hence He immediately infers as follows, after He shall have subjected all things to Him, then shall the Son subject Himself to the Father.” Then he says, “Let us wait patiently until Christ shall vanquish all of His enemies, and shall bring us along with Himself under the dominion of God, that the kingdom of God may in every respect be accomplished in us.”

Consider verse 28: “And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” Have you stopped to consider the final goal of God's redemptive plan? The Apostle Paul gives us that goal in Romans 11:36: “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.” “Of him” means originally; “through him,” providentially; and “to him,” ultimately. All things are to Him, to whom be glory forever.

The Son, as the Servant of the Father and as the Mediator, was given authority, and in the end He renders that authority back to the Father. When the mediatorial kingdom of Jesus Christ ceases, nothing shall appear except the essential kingdom of God—the power by which the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost shall govern and rule all things.

In Psalm 73:25, David asks, “Whom have I in heaven but thee?” Then he answers, “There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.” Whom have I in heaven but Thee? No one. Is there anyone I desire upon earth but Thee? The answer is no.

John Trapp, the old Puritan, said: “Till sin and death be abolished, we have no access to God but by Christ. But after that all the enemies be trod underfoot, then shall we have immediate union

with God. Yet so, as that this shall be the proper and everlasting praise of Christ, as he is the procurer of that union."

The only way you and I can get to God the Father right now is through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. Ephesians 2:18. In John 14:6, he said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by me." You and I cannot get to God except through Jesus Christ in the Spirit. Once this mediatorial kingdom has come to an end, there will be no need of a mediator. We will have immediate, instantaneous union and communion with the One True and the Living God.

Here is what John Gill said: "By God is not meant the Father personally, but God essentially considered Father, Son and Spirit who are the one true and living God, to whom all saints will have immediate access, in whose presence they will be, and with whom they shall have uninterrupted fellowship without the use of such mediators as they now enjoy. All the three divine persons will have equal power and government in and over all the saints and will sit upon the one and the same throne. There will be no more acting by delegated power or derived authority. God will be all in all to His saints immediately without the use of means. He will be that to their bodies as meat and clothes are without the use of them, and all lighting, glory, and happiness to their souls without the use of ordinances or any means. He will then be all perfection and bliss to all the elect, and in them all, which he now is not, because some are still dead in trespasses and sins."

When all are saved, all are called, and when the kingdom of God mediatorially through Jesus Christ is at an end, we are going to have absolute, instant, total, immediate access to God.

The truth of the matter is this: God is already our all in all in the strictest sense. I often think, "Lord, thank you for life." Why? Because He holds my soul in life. My times are in His hands. Thank you for health. Thank you for everything. If God cut our breath off, we're gone. If God cut our food off, we're gone. If God cut our water off, we're gone. I am simply saying that, in the strictest sense of the word, right now He is truly our all in all.

However, in eternity, He will be very clearly our all in all. We will have uninterrupted union and communion with God. If you do not

love the Lord now, if you do not love His fellowship now, and if you do not want Him to be your all in all now, you would not like eternity, because that is what it is going to be like.

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea," no more division. "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God."

Have you ever thought about God dwelling with us? "And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb."

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations."

"And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see his face; and his name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever."

"And they shall see his face." Matthew 5 says, "Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God." Moses said, "Shew me thy face." The Lord said, "No man can see my face, and live." Yet in eternity, we will have instantaneous, immediate access with the One True and Living God. There will be no more means, no more ordinances, just total, absolute union and communion with the One True and Living God who has revealed Himself in Father, Son and Holy Spirit. To have instant, immediate access and union and communion with the One True and Living God is mind-boggling.

Then cometh the end. There will be a consummation. But until then, there's a continuation. Finally, there is going to be a completion. And we shall see him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before thee. We thank you for your word, your promise, and your truth. Lord, we want to see Thy face. We want to be like Thee. We want to be holy. We want to be godly. We want to love Thee with all of our hearts and serve Thee and worship and honor Thee. Until that day, enable us, encourage us to come to Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, and bring the honor. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

Then comes the end: there will be a consummation. Until then, there is a continuation. Finally, there will be a completion, and we shall see Him.

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, we bow before Thee. We thank Thee for Thy Word, Thy promise, and Thy truth. Lord, we want to see Thy face. We want to be like Thee, holy and godly; to love Thee with all our hearts, serve Thee, worship, and honor Thee. Until that day, enable and encourage us to come to Thee through the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit, and bring the honor. In the name of Jesus Christ, we ask and pray. Amen.

CHAPTER 6

The Rapture Of The Wicked

Luke 17 verse 26. And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it also be in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all. Likewise also, as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted and builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. And that day he which shall be upon the housetop and his stuff in the house, let him not come down to take it away, and he that is in the field, let him likewise not return back. Remember Lot's wife. Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose it, and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it. I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in one bed, the one shall be taken, the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together, the one shall be taken, the other left. Two men shall be in the field, the one shall be taken, the other left. And they answered and said unto him, Where, Lord? And he said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.

Introduction: The Problem of Wanting to Be Right

You know, the problem is everybody wants to be right. And not only do we want to be right, we want our family to be right. We want our church to be right. We want our friends to be right. Therefore, we will always defend the views that we hold and, necessarily, the views that our friends hold.

I remember years ago when the Lord not only saved me but called me to preach. Then I went to college, and I remember in class the teacher was teaching something entirely different than I had been taught. If that teacher was right, and I realized it, not only was I wrong, but all my friends who had taught me and helped me were wrong as well. I never will forget: I stood in class and, where I went to the university, you just don't do this, but I was so upset, I was so angry, I put my finger in his face and I said, the only reason you're saying what you're saying is because you want to be intellectually

Accepted in the academic elite. And you know what he said to me? “Mr. Weaver, sit down and shut up. I’ll see you after class.” What galled me was realizing that if what he was saying was right, then I was wrong, and all my friends were wrong. I did not want my friends to be wrong more than I did not want to be wrong myself. It meant, therefore, that all the teaching and all the years I had received were in vain.

Usually, whenever anyone hears anything different from the way he was raised or taught, the first response is to reject it, simply casting it aside. Why? Because we believe that what we have always been taught and heard is right. Usually, it takes hearing a subject two or three times before we even begin to see it. Once we begin to see it, and everything clicks and falls into place, we wonder why we never understood it the first time. Why did we ever get upset? Why did we ever reject it? Because now we can see it clearly.

Confusion Over Eschatology and the Need for Exegesis

Whenever you begin to talk about eschatology—the study of last things—there is so much confusion over eschatology today. Whatever your eschatological position is, and I am going to define

the major positions in just a moment, let me point out that most people believe what they believe eschatologically not because they have studied it from Scripture and are convinced that this is what Scripture teaches. Most believe it because that is what they have heard all their lives, what they have been taught and preached to, and that is why they believe it.

But do you realize that this is true in every other doctrine? That is why most Baptists are Baptists—not because they have studied the Bible and believe Baptists are closer to the Word of God than any other group, but because they were raised Baptists. The same is true of Roman Catholics and Methodists. The truth is, most of us simply do not study.

In light of the video series and the book Left Behind, there is a plethora of books promoting all kind of eschatological positions. It is interesting that there are so many prophecy conferences. Turn on the television, and everybody is talking about prophecy and what is going to happen forty years from now. They are worrying about the Antichrist and the mark on the nose of the Antichrist, but no one is concerned about living godly, holy, and obedient now. I believe, first of all, there is an undue emphasis placed upon eschatology. Eschatology is important, and I am going to talk about that in just a moment.

The truth is, the average church and the average Christian is living in utter chaos and confusion. That is true not only in his individual life, but in the church, in our homes, and in the state. Everywhere I go, people ask me, “Don’t you believe that we’re living in the last days?” My response is, “Of course, but which last days are you talking about?”

That question gives them a puzzled look. Let me explain. Hold Luke 17; we are coming back there. Look in your Bibles at 1 Corinthians 10 and verse 11. The Word of God says, “Now all these things happened unto them for examples, and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends, plural, of the world are come.” I will explain my question: Which last days are you talking about? There is more than one end of the world; the word ends is plural. Isn’t that amazing? How can there be more than one end of the world? I will explain in just a moment.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Acts, chapter 2. Notice, if you would please, verses 16 and 17; Acts 2, beginning there with verse 16. “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel. And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God. I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams.”

What is he saying? This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. He is talking about the day of Pentecost. Peter is preaching at the day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2, and he says, “This is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel. It shall come to pass in the last days.” The last days of what? There are the last days of the Old Covenant and the last days of the Levitical priesthood. There is more than one last days.

In 1 Peter chapter 1, in reference to Jesus Christ, Peter says, “With the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.” Here are the last times of those Old Testament sacrifices. In 1 Peter chapter 4 and verse 7, the Apostle Peter says, “The end of all things is at hand, Be ye therefore sober and watch unto prayer.” The end of all things. There were a number of things that ended in the New Testament.

When someone asks me, “Brother Weaver, don’t you believe we’re living in the last days?” my answer is, “Yes, of course.” But do you know when the last days began? Most people do not, but here it is spelled out in Scripture. Hebrews chapter 1, verse 1, says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers or different manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.”

How did God speak in the Old Testament and part of the New Testament? Through the prophets. But, “He hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.” When did the last days begin? At the first coming of Jesus Christ. We have been in the last days since the birth of Christ. We have actually been in the last days for two thousand years.

There is so much confusion over eschatology. Many times, as I will explain and show from the Bible, we practice what is known as eisegesis instead of exegesis. Eis is the Greek word meaning “into.” In eisegesis, you read into a passage what you already think and believe. Exegesis means “to draw out of.” It is when you draw out of a passage and bring forth what that passage actually teaches.

The truth is that anyone can make the Bible teach whatever he wants it to teach as long as he engages in eisegesis. But when you engage in exegesis, you cannot do that. You must make the Bible say what the Bible says.

Eschatology is important, but it is not something over which to divide fellowship. Good men have disagreed on eschatology for thousands of years. I want to assure you that I will not settle the major question of eschatology by this one message. If you do not necessarily agree with what I teach, do not get bent out of shape or upset about it. Study the Scripture. Look and see what the Scripture does say.

You must also understand that eschatology does indeed influence your worldview. It influences your everyday life, your conduct, your actions, your short-term goals, and your long-term goals. I heard J. Vernon McGee, who is now dead and thankfully knows better, say this in answer to a question about trying to subdue the world and exercise dominion: “You don't polish brass on a sinking ship.”

Well, even if this world is sinking, you still must do what God commands you to do. I do not believe the world is sinking, but I am simply saying that, based upon your eschatology, you can have either a defeatist attitude or an optimistic attitude. Eschatology is not something over which to divide, but it is important because it affects your worldview.

The Four Main Eschatological Positions

Let me give you very quickly the four main eschatological positions. Whenever you hear about eschatology, we normally think of the return of Christ, but eschatology involves death, judgment, and the return of Christ. It involves more than the return of Christ, though most people single out the return of Jesus Christ.

The first view is known as historic premillennialism. Historic premillennialism simply teaches that Jesus Christ is going to come back before the millennium; in other words, He will inaugurate the millennium by His return. Historic premillennialism did not teach a rapture, did not believe in a rapture, and did not even know of a rapture. That was the view of some of the early Baptist preachers; they were historic premillennialists.

The second group is known as the dispensational premillennialists. They teach that our Lord is coming back in two stages. He is going to come back in a rapture; then there will be a seven-year tribulation period, and He will come back a second time. Within dispensational premillennialism, you have a pre-tribulation rapture theory, a mid-tribulation rapture theory, and a post-tribulation rapture theory. Some believe the rapture will come before the tribulation, some during the tribulation, and some immediately after the tribulation. Thus, a dispensational pre-tribulation man may have several pastor friends who hold different views as to when the rapture will come.

Thirdly, you have amillennialism. Amillennialism was started by Augustine in the fourth century at the fall of the Roman Empire. Basically, it spiritualizes the millennium and says that Christ is reigning now in the heart. That is true: He is reigning now in the heart.

Fourthly, you have what is known as postmillennialism. Postmillennialism says that Christ is going to come back after the millennium, that the millennium will be an unspecified period of time, and that we will have victory on this earth in time and in history by the power of the Holy Spirit through the Word of God. That is postmillennialism. You have historic premillennialism, dispensational premillennialism, amillennialism, and postmillennialism.

The Rapture of the Wicked

Whichever position you take, all four positions teach that Jesus Christ is coming back literally, visibly, and bodily. They disagree as to when and how. If Ed wants to be an amillennialist, Henry a postmillennialist, and Doc a premillennialist, they all believe that

Christ is coming literally, visibly, and bodily. Why in the world are they going to fight about when He is coming back and how He is coming back?

I can assure you this: I do not know the answer to all of them, but at least three of those positions are wrong. We will know for sure which one is right when the Lord comes back. I am simply trying to demonstrate that there are some things on which you cannot be dogmatic. We can be absolutely dogmatic that our Lord is coming back literally, visibly, and bodily; we just cannot necessarily be dogmatic as to when and how. I know what I believe concerning that, and you may know what you believe, but we cannot fuss and fight about it and lose fellowship over it.

The Historical Origin of the Rapture Theory

I am going to preach today on what I have called the rapture of the wicked. That is an absolutely astounding and amazing subject. Most people associate the word rapture with the saints. The rapture theory as you and I have been taught it and have heard it all our lives, believe it or not, did not begin until the 1800s, specifically in the 1830s. It came to light through a woman named Margaret MacDonald, a tongue-speaking prophetess, who, during one of her trances while speaking in tongues, discovered this dispensational pre-trib rapture theory. She taught it to her cohort, a Roman Catholic priest. He believed it and then taught it to John Nelson Darby of the Plymouth Brethren. The Darbyites embraced what is known as dispensational pre-trib rapture theory. John Nelson Darby then taught this to one of his ablest students, a man by the name of C.I.

Scofield, who put it in the notes of the Scofield Bible. And consequently, it became popular throughout this country. There were numerous prophecy conferences back then, and of course, most of the pastors rejected what is known as the Rapture Theory. They fought against it, but however, through C.I. Scofield, it actually came to be acceptable. Now, may I point out that the word rapture does not occur in the Bible. The word rapture is derived from the Latin word rapio, which literally means to seize or to catch by force. Now, there is a difference, and let me point this out. There is a difference

between what is known as the rapture and the fact that our Lord is coming again. You see, all four views once again believe that our Lord is returning literally and visibly and bodily. But the dispensational premillennialists say that He's coming back twice. Once in a secret rapture, and then once again at the end of the tribulation period. So historic premillennialism did not teach a rapture. So the fact that our Lord is indeed returning visibly bodily and will gather his own to himself.

Are you listening? That fact does not necessitate a secret rapture or even a separate rapture for the saints.

Now, I'm going to show you several verses in the Bible. The Greek word is the word harpazo. I'm going to show you every time it occurs in the New Testament. It only occurs 13 times. But the word caught up that is translated in 1 Thessalonians 4 and verse 17 is the Greek word harpazo. We'll look at it in just a moment. So please understand this word is used only 13 times.

The Biblical Meaning of Harpazo (Caught Up)

I will tell you what it means. It literally means to catch or to take away or to seize by force. For instance, let's go in our Bibles to Matthew 11, the very first time the word occurs. Very quickly, you turn with me to these passages. You can underline it in your Bibles. Here it is every time that it occurs in the New Testament. Matthew 11, and look if you would please, 12, verse 12. Matthew 11, verse 12.

Our Lord says, “And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent do what? Take it by force.” That is the word harpazo, translated there as “to take by force.”

In Matthew 13:19, He says, “When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one,” that is, Satan, “and catcheth away, or takes away by force that which was sown in his heart: this is he who receives seed by the wayside.” Satan, then, catches away, or takes the word by force.

In John 6:15, we read, “When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and harpazo, that is, take Him by force to make Him a

king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone." This is the third occurrence of the word.

In John 10:12, the Lord says, "But he that is a hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth a wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, or takes them by force, and scattereth the sheep." In verse 28, He says, "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck, or take them by force, out of my hand." Every one of these verses uses the Greek word harpazo.

In Acts 8:39, "the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip," or took him by force, and the eunuch saw him no more, but went on his way rejoicing. Acts 23:10 also uses the word in the context of taking someone by force.

Here the Word of God says, "And when there arose a great dissension, the chief captain, fearing lest Paul should have been pulled in pieces of them, commanded the soldiers to go down and to take him by force," there is the word harpazo, "from among them and bring him into the castle."

In 2 Corinthians 12, verses 2 and 4, Paul says, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth; such an one caught up" or seized and taken away by force "into the third heaven." He continues, "And I knew such a man, whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth; how that he was caught up into paradise" or seized and taken away by force.

Then, in 1 Thessalonians 4:17, the passage I alluded to earlier, we read: "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." So once again, it means to be caught up.

Jude 23 says, "And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire," that is, snatching them, taking them by force out of the fire, "hating even the garment spotted by the flesh." Revelation 12:5 says, "And she brought forth a man child, who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron: and her child was caught up unto God, and to his throne." Those are the only passages in the New Testament where

the word harpazo was used. Remember, the word means to seize, to carry away by force, or to snatch away forcefully.

Now let me give you an amazing statement, and then I am going to prove it to you. Scripture teaches that if anyone is going to be snatched away or taken away by force, it is going to be the wicked, not the righteous. In fact, look first at Psalm 37, verses 1 and 2. We are going to return to Luke 17 in just a moment. The Word of God says to the righteous, "Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity." Why should we not get bent out of shape over the wicked? Why should we not fret over the workers of iniquity? Here is why.

Old Testament Evidence: The Wicked Are Removed, the Righteous Remain

Psalm 37:2 says, "For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb." The word soon there literally means promptly, quickly, or rather speedily.

Psalm 37 is an encouragement to the righteous in that they shall indeed inherit the earth. Verse 11 says, "But the meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace." What is going to happen to the wicked? They are going to be cut off. They are going to be cut down. It is the meek—that is, God's people, who have been broken to the yoke and submit to His rule—who are going to inherit the earth. Verse 34 says, "Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt thee to inherit the land when the wicked are cut off." Who is going to be taken away? Who is going to be cut off? It will be the wicked. The righteous are still going to be here. Understand that God does indeed remove the wicked from the land in time and in history by what you and I would call temporary judgments.

Psalm 55:23 says, "But thou, O God, shalt bring them down into the pit of destruction. Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days, but I will trust in thee." What does that mean? It means God will cut them off quickly. Proverbs 10:27 says, "The fear of the Lord prolongeth days, but the years of the wicked shall be shortened." They will be cut off. Look also at Proverbs 10:30.

The righteous shall never be removed, but the wicked shall not inhabit the earth. If the righteous are not going to be removed, who is going to be removed? The wicked. Proverbs 11:31 says, “Behold, the righteous shall be recompensed or rewarded in the earth: much more the wicked and the sinner.” If God gives the righteous rewards in time and history, and He does so, how much more will He give the wicked their reward in time and history? It will not be a full and final reward, but if God blesses and rewards us in time and history, He says, “I’ll cut off the wicked in time and history.” That is why you see, from time to time, wicked men being cut off, cut down in the prime of their youth.

Have you ever wondered why God sends these temporary judgments? Think of the hurricanes, tornadoes, and wars. Job 19:29 says, “Be afraid of the sword: for wrath bringeth the punishment of the sword, that ye may know there is a judgment.” Do you realize that all the temporary judgments in time and history point to the full and final judgment at the end of the world? Whenever you see the sword or judgment in history, it is that you may know there is a full and final judgment.

Now let us go back to Luke 17. These verses, the very same verses normally used to teach the rapture of the saints, teach exactly the opposite: the rapture of the wicked. Look in Luke 17, beginning in verse 26: “And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man.”

Luke 17 and Matthew 24: The Rapture of the Wicked

The passage is to be corroborated in 2 Peter chapter 2. Keep 2 Peter chapter 2 in mind as corroborating passage for exactly what is being read and said here in this discussion. In Luke 17:26–27, Jesus says, “And as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark and the flood came and destroyed them all.”

What is the context of Luke 17:26–27? It is the context of judgment. He said they ate and drank until the flood came and destroyed them all. They married and were given in marriage until the day Noah entered the ark, and then destruction came upon them

all. By the way, the word flood here is cataclysmos. It is where we get our English word cataclysm from. Literally, He says, "They did eat, they drank, they married wives, were given in marriage until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the cataclysm came and destroyed them all."

If you doubt my interpretation, look at 2 Peter 2:3. Peter is speaking of wicked men: "And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you, whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not. For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell and delivered them into the chains of darkness to be reserved unto judgment, and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing the flood or the cataclysm upon the world of the ungodly."

What, then, is the context of Luke 17:26-27? It is judgment. Peter speaks of the wicked, and he connects the judgment of the angels that sinned with the judgment of the old world, while Noah was saved. The same context appears in the days of Lot: "Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot, they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded. But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom, it rained fire and brimstone from heaven and destroyed them all." That is judgment. Again, 2 Peter 2:6 says, "And turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah into ashes, condemned them with an overthrow, making them an example unto those that should after live ungodly." Thus, in both the days of Noah and the days of Lot, the context is judgment.

In the days of Noah, who was taken away? The wicked. We have looked at Lot; in the days of Lot, who was taken away? The wicked. Luke 17:26-27 concerns Noah, and verses 28-29 concern Lot. Then verse 30 says, "Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." What will it be in that day? It will be a day of judgment. Who was taken away first? The wicked. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed.

Therefore, the warnings in Luke 17:31-36 are given in the context of judgment. Verses 31-33 are a warning against an unsound, or unreal, profession of faith.

Look at it. In verse 31: “In that day he which shall be upon the housetop, and his stuff in the house, let him not come down and take it away. He that is in the field, let him likewise not return back.” Why? There would be no reason to. Remember Lot’s wife. “Whosoever shall seek to save his life shall lose; and whosoever shall lose his life shall preserve it.”

Now, how can this be a warning against an unreal profession of faith? Just because an individual professes faith in Jesus Christ does not mean that individual is a real Christian. Hypocrites do that often, and Pharisees do that regularly. Was Lot’s wife saved by her association with Lot? No. Are unsaved church members saved by their association with the church? No. Plenty of people have been baptized and have joined churches, yet have never been saved by the grace of God. In the day of judgment, they will not be spared.

What does 2 Timothy 2:19 say? “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” You might can fool me, but you cannot fool God. No one can fool Him. The Lord knows who is genuinely converted and who is not. He says you need to remember Lot’s wife.

Now look at what our Lord says in verse 34: “I tell you, in that night there shall be two men in bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left. Two women shall be grinding together; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two men shall be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.”

All my life I have heard that preached as a rapture of the saints: you wake up and find your mate gone, or the airplane has gone without a pilot, or the car is going down the road without a driver. But what was the context of Luke 17? The context was judgment. So what does our Lord say? One is taken and one is left. Would you not like to know where those people were taken? The disciples wanted to know. In verse 37 they asked Him, “Where, Lord? Where are these folks taken?”

“And our Lord said unto them, Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered together.” They asked, Lord, where are

these people going to be taken? He said, wherever the body is, that is where the eagles will be gathered together.

The whole context is judgment. Where are these people going to be taken? To death and to judgment. I am going to show it to you from the Bible. Hold Luke 17, and turn first to Job 39, beginning with verse 27: “Doth the eagle mount up at thy command, or make her nest on high? She dwelleth and abideth on the rock, upon the crag of the rock, and the strong place. From thence she seeketh the prey, and her eyes behold afar off. Her young ones also suck up the blood, and where the slain are, there is she.”

Look also in Proverbs 30 and verse 17: “The eye that mocketh at his father and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out and the young eagles shall eat it.”

They said, Lord, You said two are going to be in bed, one is taken and one left; two are going to be grinding at the mill, one taken and one left; two in the field, one taken and one left. Where are they taken? “Wheresoever the body is, that's where the eagles are going to be gathered together.”

To confirm everything that I have told you, look in Matthew 24, the parallel passage of Luke 17, at verse 28: “For wheresoever the carcass is, there will the eagles be gathered together.” Would someone like to elaborate and tell me what a carcass is? It is a dead body, is it not? In fact, that is exactly the word used here in the Greek. It is a carcass. It is a dead body. That is where the eagles are gathered together.

Where were these people taken? They were snatched out. They were raptured. They were taken by force. They were taken to death and to judgment.

If you think I am making this up, stay in Matthew 24 and look at verse 37: “But as the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. For the days that were before the flood, they were eating and drinking and marrying and giving in marriage until the day that Noah entered the ark and knew not until the flood came and took them all away. So shall also the coming of the Son of man be.”

“There shall be two in the field, the one shall be taken, the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill, the one shall be taken,

the other left. Watch therefore, you know not what hour your Lord doth come."

May I remind you of this fact? When the Bible speaks of the coming of the Lord, it does not always speak of His visible, physical, bodily return. How can I say that? Because He comes in several ways, and one of the ways that He comes is in judgment. It is true that He is going to come in judgment at the final time as well. But many times in the Bible, the coming of the Lord refers to a time of judgment. Here, these two that are going to be taken are taken to judgment and death, the same thing as in Luke chapter 17.

The Parable of the Wheat and Tares: The Wicked Gathered First

Matthew 13 gives another passage that says what I have been trying to enunciate. Our Lord is teaching, and all that He teaches is an eye-opener: "Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened to a man which sowed good seed in his field. And while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? For whence then hath it tares? He says unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servant said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? And he said, Nay, lest while you gather up the tares, you root up also the wheat with them. Let both go together unto the harvest. And in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Now, let us go back to verse 24. Our Lord is teaching and says, "Here is what the kingdom of heaven is really like." It is like a man who sowed good seed in a field. But while he slept, the enemy, who is the devil, came and sowed tares.

The interesting thing is that the tare and the wheat look exactly alike. Just looking at them, you really cannot tell any difference. But when the blade was sprung up and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. Tares do not produce fruit. Since some had fruit and some did not, they came to our Lord and said, "Someone

has sown tares in your field. Let us go out and root them up. Let us take care of my whole nose in the Lord."

He said, "Do not do that. Let them both stay together until the harvest." Then, at the harvest, He said, "You will gather first the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them. Then we will get the wheat."

You say, "Now, Brother Weaver, are you trying to tell me that our Lord is saying that when He comes back, He is going to first get the tares?" Yes. You say, "Well, that is a big supposition on your part." Oh, no, I cheated. I read the rest of the chapter.

In verse 38, our Lord gives this interpretation Himself. I do not see how it can be any plainer. Matthew 13:36 says, "Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field." He answered, "He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man." The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one. The enemy that sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the world.

The reapers are the angels. As the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of Man shall send forth His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all of His elect from the four corners of the earth. Is that what the verse says? No. They shall gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and them that do iniquity, and shall cast them into a furnace of fire, where there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

Who is left? Who is taken? The wicked. Our Lord says this is exactly the way it will be at the end of the world. The wicked are going to be taken out and destroyed. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

The only thing I am trying to show you is this: if you are going to talk about a rapture, let us talk about the rapture of the wicked,

because they are going to be seized and taken away by force unto judgment.

Let us look at verse 47 and make sure our Lord really knew what He was talking about. Matthew 13:47 says, “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.” Then our Lord says, “So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them, the wicked, into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.”

Jesus saith unto them, Have you understood all these things? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. What did our Lord just get out of His mouth? The wicked are going to be taken out first.

Now, someone says, “Well, Brother Weaver, those are parables.” What is a parable? It is a way to understand truth, to convey truth and make it clear and understandable. But it is not just Matthew 13, Matthew 24, Luke 17, and other passages that teach it; a multitude of others do as well.

New Testament Confirmation and Final Application

Look at Paul’s eschatology in 2 Thessalonians 1:7: “And to you who are troubled, rest with us.” Oh, I like that. “And to you who are in trouble, rest with us. When the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels,” when He is revealed, what is He going to do? “In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power.”

Look at verse 10: “When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired of all them that believe.” What is our Lord going to do? He is going to destroy the wicked first, and then He is going to be glorified and admired by all of His saints. Is not that simple?

There are a multitude of passages. Psalm 58 is sufficient, or at least it should be, because it does not matter whether it is the testimony of the Old Testament or the testimony of the New

Testament. “Do you indeed speak righteousness, O congregation? Do you judge uprightly, O you sons of men?” Now look how our Lord describes the wicked: “Yea, in heart you work wickedness. You weigh the violence of your hands in the earth. The wicked are estranged from the womb. They go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies. Their poison is like the poison of a serpent. They’re like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear, which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely.” So the wicked are.

They are totally depraved and cannot change in and of themselves. And so now we begin this imprecatory prayer. David says, “Break their teeth, O God, in their mouth: break out the great teeth of the young lions, O LORD. Let them melt away as waters which run continually: when he bendeth his bow to shoot his arrows, let them be as cut in pieces. As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. Before your pots can feel the thorns, he shall take them away with a whirlwind, both living, and in his wrath.” Here is God's judgment against them.

Now watch what God is going to do: He is going to judge and destroy the wicked. “The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance. He shall wash his feet in the blood of the wicked: so that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous: verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.” May I ask you a question? Who is left? Who is standing around watching the destruction of the wicked? The righteous. That is what he says.

Do you realize that so many people think, “I will put off seeking the Lord. I will put off salvation and wait. When the saints are, quote unquote, raptured out, then I will believe and repent”? But, dear friend, if it is not the saints who are raptured, if it is the wicked who are taken by force, seized, and carried away to judgment, what are you going to do then? Many who plan to repent at twelve p.m. died at 11:59. How wicked men are in failing to seek the Lord.

If all of these verses I read this morning are true—and they are true—when the Lord returns, the first thing on His agenda is to destroy the wicked: “In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the

presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power; when he shall come to be admired in all them that believe." You know what this ought to do? It ought to encourage every true child of God to holy living. It ought to excite us, because we know the wicked will not get away with their wickedness.

You may ask, Brother Weaver, how can you say that? I can say it because of Revelation chapter 19. Do you remember when the smoke of their torment ascended up forever and ever? What do the saints say? Hallelujah. For the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. When our Lord returns—whether in historic premillennialism, amillennialism, or postmillennialism—the first thing on His agenda is to destroy the wicked. Then the righteous shall shine as the stars. Let us pray.

CHAPTER 7

The Last Days

SCRIPTURE READING - 2 Timothy 3:1-9 (KJV)

Introduction and Review

Last week, after I dealt with the subject of the rapture of the wicked, a number of people came up to me and asked questions. Some said, “You need to continue on that same vein next week.” So I thought I would give you a little stimulation and then see whether there are any questions. I am not going to promise that I can answer all of them, but I will certainly answer what I can.

I brought with me a book that you might find extremely interesting. I will tell you about it in just a moment. Last week I dealt with the fact of the second coming of Christ and showed you from scripture after scripture that when Christ returns, the very first thing he is going to do is destroy the wicked. Then he says the saints are going to shine as the sun in his kingdom.

I dealt generally with the phrase “the last days.” Since that is a question everyone has on his mind and asks constantly and continually—are we living in the last days?—I want to show you

a passage, and then I am going to come back and expound this passage after we do a little more research.

Reading 2 Timothy 3:1-9

The apostle Paul says, "This know also that in the last days, perilous times shall come, for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unholy, unthankful, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof, from such turn away. For of this sort are they that creep among the houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lust, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth. Men of corrupt minds reprobate concerning the faith, but they shall proceed no further, for their folly shall be manifest unto all men as theirs also was."

The Apostle Paul says this: "This know also that in the last days perilous times shall come."

Inevitably, wherever you go, people will tell you that we are living in the last days, not only because of wars and rumors of war, earthquakes, and famines, but because you look around at people today and they are proud, covetous, boasters, disobedient, and undisciplined. This is the last days. The Scripture makes it exceedingly plain.

Let me tell you something about the last days. Whenever you read the phrase "the last days," you will also find the parallel phrase "the latter days." The last days and the latter days are identical. I want you to understand, first of all, that phrase and show you how it is used. I want to go back through the Bible, show you how this phrase is used, and then return to analyze 2 Timothy chapter 3 momentarily.

The Phrase 'Last Days' in the Old Testament

First, go to Genesis chapter 49. Understand that the phrase “the last days,” or “the latter days,” can refer simply to something in the future. For instance, if you look in the book of Genesis chapter 49 and verse 1, the Bible says, “And Jacob called unto his sons, and said, Gather yourselves together, that I may tell you that which shall befall you in the last days.”

What is Jacob doing? He is gathering his sons together and saying, “This is the future. This is what is going to happen to each of you.” The latter days would refer to the latter days of their lives, the latter days of their descendants, and so forth. It simply has reference to the future.

Look in your Bibles to the book of Numbers chapter 24 and verse 14. Balaam says to Balak, “And now, behold, I go unto my people: come therefore, and I will advertise thee what this people Israel shall do to thy people in the latter days.” In other words, in the future there will be a war, and Israel will destroy Moab.

It is just that simple, and that is all it refers to. The point is this: the latter days or the last days does not always refer to the little period of time right before Jesus Christ returns.

Deuteronomy 4:30 says, “When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the Lord thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice; (for the Lord thy God is a merciful God;) he will not forsake thee, neither destroy thee, nor forget the covenant of thy fathers which he sware unto them.” Note the words, “when thou art in tribulation.” This means any tribulation, not the great tribulation, but whenever you are in trouble and all these things come upon you. He says, “in the latter days,” that is, sometime in the future. The latter days of your life, the latter days of the covenant, or the latter days of anything do not necessarily refer to the last few days before the return of Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 2:1-2 says, “The word that Isaiah the son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem. And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and

all nations shall flow into it." This passage is important, and Micah 4:1 is almost a parallel passage. Now, when you look at verse 2, it says, "It shall come to pass in the last days."

When people read those words, they often say, "Right before Christ comes back." But that is not what this passage is talking about. Mountains in the Bible usually speak of kingdoms. Thus, this could be read: "It shall come to pass in the last days that the kingdom of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains," or the other kingdoms, "and shall be exalted above all the hills," that is, all dominions, "and all nations shall flow into it."

Basically, the latter days here do not refer to the last days before the coming of Jesus Christ. They refer to the last days of the Old Covenant, before Jesus Christ, who is the fulfillment of that covenant, came.

Jeremiah 23:20 says, "The anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have executed, and till he have performed the thoughts of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it perfectly." Does "the latter days" mean the last few days before Christ returns, when we will consider God's judgment perfectly, thoroughly, and completely? No. It means that after it happens, we will consider it. Jeremiah 30:24 says, "The fierce anger of the Lord shall not return, until he have done it, and until he have performed the intents of his heart: in the latter days ye shall consider it." This does not mean that in the last few days before Christ returns, everybody will suddenly consider the judgment and fury of God. In the latter days—that is, after it has happened, sometime in the future—folks will consider it.

Jeremiah 48:47 says, "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days, saith the Lord. Thus far is the judgment of Moab." What does that mean? Verse 46 says, "Woe be unto thee, O Moab! the people of Chemosh perisheth: for thy sons are taken captives, and thy daughters captives." Yet God says, "Yet will I bring again the captivity of Moab in the latter days." In other words, in the last days before Moab is thoroughly cut off, God says, "I'm gonna bring you back again." "Thus far is the judgment of Moab." Therefore, "the latter days" means the last days and does not mean the last few days before the return of Christ. Now look in your Bibles to Jeremiah 49 and verse 39.

The same application and the same truth appear concerning Elam: “But it shall come to pass in the latter days, that I will bring again the captivity of Elam, saith the Lord.” That is, the latter days of their punishment. God said, “I’m going to turn around and bring them again.”

I’m trying to demonstrate one particular point: every time you see “the last days” or “the latter days,” it does not refer to the return, or right before the return, of Jesus Christ. In Daniel 2:28, God had given Nebuchadnezzar a dream that referred to the latter days—not of the coming of Christ, but of the destruction of the Old Covenant. “But there is a God in heaven that revealeth secrets, and maketh known to the king Nebuchadnezzar what shall be in the latter days. Thy dream, and the visions of thy head upon thy bed, are these.”

Then he talks about the great beast, which represents the Roman Empire, the Persian Empire, and the Median Empire. All this refers to the latter days of the Old Covenant, or even the latter days of the Babylonian Empire. It does not necessarily refer to the latter days right before Christ returns.

Daniel 10:14 says, “Now I am come to make thee understand what shall befall thy people in the latter days: for yet the vision is for many days.” Once you study the context, it refers once again to the judgment of God upon the nation, the destruction of the nation, and the end of the Old Covenant.

Hosea 3:5 says, “For the children of Israel shall abide many days without a king, and without a prince, and without a sacrifice, and without an image, and without an ephod, and without teraphim: Afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek the Lord their God, and David their king; and shall fear the Lord and his goodness in the latter days.” Once again, this passage refers to the nation Israel and their judgment, how God is going to judge them. The latter days refer not necessarily to the return of Christ, but to the latter days of the kingdom and of their nation. And they shall seek the Lord.

Some of them did trust in David their king in the latter days. This is the verse previously identified as parallel to Isaiah 2:2, and it demonstrates that the prophetic witness was not limited to one

passage. Micah 4:1 parallels Isaiah 2:2: “But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow into it.” Hosea talked about people trusting in David their king in the latter days. Here this passage once again parallels Isaiah 2:2, speaking of the kingdom of the Lord and how people are going to flow into it.

The Last Days Began with Christ's First Coming

Hebrews 1:1 says, “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.” How did God speak to the prophets in the Old Testament? He spoke to them sometimes through visions, sometimes through dreams, sometimes through trances, and sometimes they may have heard His voice. He spoke in many different ways in the Old Covenant. But look at what He says in verse 2: “Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.”

So when did the last days commence? The last days began at the first coming of Jesus Christ. It was indeed the last days of the Old Covenant, and you could say, in one sense of the word, that the advent of Jesus Christ, the very first advent of Jesus Christ, was the beginning of the end. How long have we been in the last days?

And the answer is, ever since Jesus Christ came. Do you remember the passage in Isaiah 2, Micah 4, and Hosea, saying that people were going to flow into the kingdom when His kingdom was exalted? What happens on the day of Pentecost? Peter is preaching: “Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that.” Here is an absolute fulfillment, and he is getting it from the book of Joel: “But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel.”

“And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old

men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke." What did Peter just get out of his mouth?

Go back to Joel, chapter 2, verse 28: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders," etc. What did Peter say in Acts chapter 2? "This is that which was prophesied by Joel that in the last days." When the day of Pentecost was fully come—and Pentecost means fifty, occurring fifty days after the ascension of Christ—Peter said, "This is that which was prophesied by Joel that in the last days." They understood that they were in the last days at the day of Pentecost.

Let me show you a few passages in the New Testament. Look in 1 John chapter 2, verse 18.

What did John say? "Little children, it is the last time: and as ye have heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time." How do we know that we are in the last times? Not only because Christ has come and the Bible says that in the last times God will speak only by His Son. We know that they had Pentecost in the last times because Peter says, "this is that" which was prophesied by Joel. And we know that we are in the last times because now there are many antichrists, that is, those who are against Christ. You cannot be in the last times without having antichrist, because Christ came in the last time. You see the reasoning? You cannot be against someone who has not yet appeared. That is his argument.

The End of the Old Covenant in 70 A.D.

Peter writes, "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer." How could Peter write in his day that the end of all things was at hand? What happened in 70 A.D.? Jerusalem was destroyed. Their priesthood was destroyed.

Everything was done away with. In Hebrews 8:13, look what happened to all those Old Testament sacrifices, ceremonies, and rituals: "In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." Those old ceremonies, sacrifices, and that old priesthood waxed old and were ready to vanish away. And that is exactly what happened.

I have said all of that to enunciate a simple truth in this passage. Please remember that there is a difference between eisegesis and exegesis. The Greek word eis means into. When you eisegete a passage, you read your presupposition into it. When you already believe something, you look at the passage and read into it what you want to find—what you already believe. That is eisegesis. Exegesis is when you draw forth and draw out of that passage exactly what that passage teaches.

Exegesis of 2 Timothy 3 in Context

You have to be extremely careful because everyone has basic presuppositions. Therefore, you must exegete a passage rather than approach it trying to prove whatever you can prove. You can prove anything from the Bible as long as you eisegete it, as long as you read into it. You have heard about the man who wanted to follow the Bible by closing his eyes, opening a passage, and putting his finger on it. He did that and read, "Judas went out and hanged himself."

He thought, "That's no good." He turned a few pages, put his finger down, and read, "Go and do thou likewise." That is not exactly following the Bible.

Now let me show you how this passage has been taken out of context. In 2 Timothy chapter 3, verse 1, we read, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Everyone says, "Brother Weaver, we are living in the last days because we are in perilous times." And I can assure you that we are in perilous times—governmentally, economically, ecclesiastically, familially, and spiritually.

But watch this. I know there are going to be perilous times. The Apostle Paul says, "This know that in the last days perilous times shall come." What is one of the marks of perilous times? "For men

shall be lovers of their own selves." Is that not what we have today? Not only lovers of their own selves, but covetous. No one is ever satisfied; they want more and more and more. Boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents. We live in a time when there is no respect for parents. Today, most parents do not run the children; the children run the parents. They are also unthankful—and that is true today—unholy, and without natural affection.

Look at the rise of sodomy and how our government supports the sodomites. They are truce-breakers. Men do not keep their word today, and governments do not keep their words. Look at what our government did to the Indians and to nearly every country with which it entered into a covenant or agreement. Look at what it has done to the American people. We have a covenant, the Constitution. Have they violated that? Yes. They are without natural affection, truce-breakers, and false accusers. "Incontinent" literally means undisciplined. That is self-explanatory.

Paul describes people as fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, and lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. It seems like the Apostle Paul was alive in our time, doesn't it? He says, "Having a form of godliness but denying the power thereof."

First and Second Timothy and Titus are pastoral epistles. They are a divinely inspired pastoral manual in which Paul tells Timothy, as a pastor, how to act. In Second Timothy chapter 2, verse 24, he says, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." We are not to be fighting and trying to teach people, but we are to be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, and patient. Why? Verse 25 says, "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves."

What is the pastor's only hope of success in the gospel? Here it is: "In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will."

God says the pastor should not be a fighter, fighting amongst himself and others and the people all the time. He is to be gentle,

ready and able to teach, and patient in meekness, instructing others who oppose themselves. Here is our hope of success: if God will give these people repentance, they will acknowledge the truth; and when they acknowledge the truth, they recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who were taken captive by him at his will.

Paul is saying, "Timothy, here's how you're to teach most people." But there are some people you are not going to be able to teach.

Now look what he says. Is he not telling Timothy how to teach? Is that not what is in 2 Timothy chapter 2? After telling him how to teach, he says, "This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come." Timothy will run into those who are lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof. Paul's instruction to Timothy is, "From such turn away."

Timothy, don't even try to teach these people. I thought chapter 3, verse 1, talked about those days right before the coming of Christ. You see what Paul is saying? Perilous times will come and go throughout the entire period of the last days. When Timothy encounters such people, he is not to try to be patient and kind and apt to teach toward them; he is to turn away from them. Paul explains further in verse 6: "For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts." These people profess a religion, perhaps even Christianity, but they are immoral and deceptive.

And by the way, let me point out once again that God requires women to lean upon their husbands for leadership and direction. Do you realize that most cults are either run by or covered up with women?

That is not knocking a woman, but may I remind you what the Bible says? "And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression." Eve was deceived and sinned

when she did not go to her husband and rely upon him. She acted independently from him. Then she took and gave to him.

The charismatic movement has been in this country for a multitude of years. With the exception of one time, of all the people who have questioned me about tongues throughout the country, it has always been women. I am going to tell you something: if you took the women out of the charismatic movement, you just about would not have a charismatic movement. The point I am trying to make is this: these wicked men try to deceive women not only physically, but also intellectually and emotionally.

So he says they are led away with divers lusts. “Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.” Not only are they immoral; they are intellectually inferior. They may have much knowledge, but they have absolutely no spiritual discernment, wisdom, or understanding. Just because someone can quote the Bible does not make that person godly. Satan can quote the Bible.

Paul then gives an illustration: “Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth.” These were two magicians in the book of Exodus who withstood Moses when he was sent to Pharaoh with the command, “Let my people go.” Moses—or Aaron—threw down the rod, and it became a serpent. The magicians threw down their rods, and they became serpents also; but Aaron’s rod ate up all the other serpents. When Moses turned the river into blood, they also turned water into blood.

Moses's opponents were saying that he had no divine commission, that God had never sent him, and that he was merely one of them, perhaps somewhat more advanced in the craft of witchery. But when Moses smote the ground and it turned into lice, they smote it and could not do the same. That was it; they could do nothing else. Finally, the magicians were forced to testify to Pharaoh, "Know you not that Egypt is ruined? The hand of God is against us."

They were withstanding Moses's divine commission. They were saying that Moses had not been sent from God and did not have the Word of God. They tried to trick everybody into believing that Moses was not of God by imitating what he did. That is exactly what Paul is talking about: "Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses," and

the word "withstood" and the word "resist" are exactly the same. It literally means to stand against. "As Jannes and Jambres stood against Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was."

This passage is normally taken to teach that we are in the last days because of wicked and ungodly people. But Paul was writing to Timothy, and these people were alive when Timothy was alive. We simply happen to have some just like them today.

Historical Date-Setting and Its Folly

An interesting thing is that I came across a book six or seven months ago titled The Day and the Hour, written by Francis X. Gumerlock: Christianity's Perennial Fascination with Predicting the End of the World. It is a listing of dates, places, and times when men have predicted the end of the world or the return of Christ, or identified the Antichrist, ever since basically the first century. It is unbelievable.

For instance, this is rapture fever in the late twentieth century. In July 1987, God allegedly commissioned a twelve-year-old Korean boy named Bang Ik-Ha to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ. Now that ought to tell you something. What is one of the qualifications of being a pastor or preacher? Not a novice, lest, being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil. God allegedly said, “Just as I prepared John the Baptist before the Son of Man came to earth, again I am preparing Habanic, whatever his name is.” This was in 1987.

Colin Dale, in 1797, predicted that Christ would return by 1988. He wrote a book, Christ Returns by 1988, 100 Reasons Why. Edgar Whisenant wrote 88 Reasons Why the Rapture is in 1988. R. G. Steyer said in 1988 that he had been appointed God’s end-time prophet to America and that he had anointed a young Russian man as the end-time Elijah a few years earlier. The book gives date after date after date. Yet you can go back to 1919, the 1800s, the 1700s, the 1600s, the 1500s, the 1400s, 850, 789, and 423, where people had predicted the end of the world upon the same signs.

Now you ask me, “Pastor, when is the end of the world?” Which world? If you are talking about the end of the world of the Old Testament age, it has already ended. I like what Rushdoony said. Someone once asked him, “Mr. Rushdoony, how much time do you think we have left?” Rush said, “Based upon all that we need to do, probably twenty or twenty-five thousand years.”

That is not what people want to hear. No man knows the day nor the hour when our Lord returns. Whenever people begin to set dates and tell you that this is it, write down that they are a nutcase. They do not know. No one knows the day nor the hour. People have used all these same signs; one man even said the world was going to end in 1666.

In 1197, William of Goldsmith prophesied that within five years the catastrophes of the book of Revelation—famine, sword, earthquake, and fire from heaven—would take place. The interesting thing is that people have repeatedly believed wars and rumors of war were fulfilling end-time prophecy. From 300 to 1400, the tables in this book list wars that people regarded as signs: in the fourth century, the Huns versus the Alans and the Alans versus the Goths; in the fifth century, the Vandal sack of Rome; in the tenth century, the Hungarian invasion of Saxony; in the eleventh century, the First Crusade; in the thirteenth century, the latter Crusades and the Mongol invasion of Hungary. In other words, people looked at these wars and said, “Well, this is it.”

But the point is that no one knows the day nor the hour. Yes, we are in the last days, but we have been in the last days since Christ came the first time. The last days as we know them will not end until He comes the second time.

The Final Triumph of Christ and the Resurrection

First Corinthians 15:20 says, “But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept.” He has been raised bodily and has become the firstfruits of them that slept. “For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.” Whoever is in Adam is dead; whoever is in Christ is alive. “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are

Christ's at his coming." When Christ returns a second time, "Then cometh the end: When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

When is the end coming? When Christ totally, completely triumphs. Then cometh the end, and He is going to hand the kingdom over to God the Father. Until then, you do not need to concern yourselves about wars and rumors of war or what is happening over in Israel. That is another subject. I get exasperated at people asking, "Did you hear what happened over there?" I do not give a flip what happened over there.

When you start trying to interpret the Bible by newspapers and headlines, you are wrong. Scripture interprets Scripture. I look for the visible, physical, bodily return of Christ. When it will be, I have no earthly idea. But I know He is going to reign until He puts all enemies under His feet. When He has absolute, total, thorough, complete control over everything—and He does have it now spiritually, though He has not necessarily applied it in every area yet—then cometh the end.

First Thessalonians 4 is one of those passages that you have to exegete and not eisegete. There are simple explanations, and you always interpret Scripture with other Scripture. First Corinthians 15 says that when He returns, there will be a resurrection. If you look in First Thessalonians 4, that is exactly what it says. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him."

This brings me to the question of what happens to a person when he dies. For those who are saved, absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. For those who are lost, absent from the body means to be in punishment—in hell, in Hades, whatever you want to call it. It means to be in trouble. Those who are asleep, Christ is going to bring with Him. "For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the

Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." So those who are asleep are already with Christ.

"For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first." There is the bodily resurrection. Those whom Christ brings will receive a glorified body. "Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." We will receive our glorified body.

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words." This says nothing about a so-called rapture. If you read that into the passage, you have to read it in there. All it says is that Christ is going to come, and when He comes, He is going to raise the believing dead.

Why does it say that we will be caught up together with Him in the clouds? Maybe—and I do not know; I am simply pointing this out—the word "the" is not in the Greek. It literally says that we will be caught up in clouds. Clouds could refer to the multitude of people who are caught up. If it says that we will meet the Lord in the air, consider all the people who have ever lived since creation, who have died, who will be resurrected, and who are saved and believe. Is there enough room on this earth for everybody? I do not know. I have no earthly idea. Maybe that is why we meet there.

I am simply pointing out that the Bible does not say we stay in the air. We meet Him there. What do you find in the Book of Revelation? John saw the new Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. It is coming down to earth. Peter says that we are going to have a new heaven and a new earth. I believe that heaven will be on this earth. It will be a purged, purified, glorified earth, but it will be here. I do not think it will be over Atlanta first, brother. Now, go to 2 Peter.

The New Heavens and New Earth

The problem is that we must understand the cosmic influence of sin. Sin did not merely affect individuals; it affected the earth and the heavens. Nothing is clean now in the sight of God. This is what Peter is discussing.

"This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour: Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers." There is that phrase again, "walking after their own lusts, And saying, Where is the promise of his coming?"

"For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: Whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store." The same heavens and earth now are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

"But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." That is thorough, total purging and judgment. "Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." So what is the new heaven, and what is the new earth?

It's going to be a place of perfect righteousness, where there will be no contamination, sin, or wickedness. All of that is going to be taken care of.

The Intermediate State and Final Judgment

It will be a resurrected, glorified body. The real Jane is not sitting by John; the real Jane is inside her house. That's exactly right. This is your earth suit. That earth suit drops off. I get in trouble with this all the time. I love my mother dearly, and she will ask me, "Well, have you been by the cemetery?"

My father was dead four years, July the 4th. Eight years, four and four. Eight years on July the 4th. He died July the 4th. I tell my mother, “Mother, I don't mind going by there,” and I do, because I take care of the grave. “But Dad is not there. He is not there. That's just where his house melted.” That's what 2 Corinthians chapter 5 tells us.

In fact, turn there. Let me show it to you. This is exactly what the Apostle Paul is saying. 2 Corinthians chapter 5, verse 1: “For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” He says we have a glorified body, a resurrected body. Then he says, “For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.”

“Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” Now watch verse 6: “Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.”

What happens when we die? This body goes to dust; it rots. But our spirit goes to God who gave it. The Apostle Paul says there is a new house, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Think of our Lord's resurrection. Do you realize—I get this question all the time, and I smile every time I answer it—people ask, “Will we recognize each other in eternity?” I always say, “Well, we won't be any more stupid there than we are now.” Think of our Lord. He had a resurrected body. Everybody recognized Him; they knew Him. Yet He was able to walk right through a wall. He had a body, a resurrected, glorified body. We will have a resurrected, glorified body.

A question was asked concerning Judgment Day for the unsaved: Are they judged as they die, and then is there another judgment day for everybody? There is the judgment seat of Christ, which is for

believers, and there is the great white throne judgment, which is for unbelievers. We will be judged according to how we serve Christ and how faithful we were, and so forth. But our salvation is not an issue in that.

In Revelation 20, we read about the great white throne judgment, where the books are opened. All the lost are judged out of those books according to their works, and of course they are condemned. Death and hell are then cast into the lake of fire, which is said to be the second death. Those who have already died unsaved are in hell; they are being punished, but there will be an even worse judgment and a worse punishment.

Another question concerned whether everlasting punishment or everlasting damnation might mean not that they will continue forever in a state of being punished, but that it will never be revoked—in other words, that this last death, the final death, the second death, is actual. There are people who believe that. I do not hold that position myself. You can even work out an equation with it, but stop and think: Is God an

Is He the eternal God? The answer is yes. He is the eternal God; that is the name given to Him. Stop and think: sin against an eternal God demands an eternal punishment. I know there are people who believe that, at the last judgment, the wicked will be annihilated and that will be the end. But I believe the Scripture says that death and hell shall be cast in the lake of fire, which is a second death. Eternal separation from God is certainly part of the worst of it.

When you get to Luke chapter 16, the rich man in hell lifted up his eyes, being in torments. He recognized Abraham, and he recognized Lazarus. That is going on right now. He knew exactly what was happening, but he has not yet faced a second judgment. In that second judgment, or last judgment, they will be forced to confess and acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, that they should have loved Him and should have served Him, but did not. Then they will receive their full and final punishment.

It is like our penal system today. A man may be convicted of something and confined in a cell. He is being punished, but not as he will be punished when he is strapped into an electric chair. Yet your

eschatology does not really affect your salvation. Suppose, for instance, Dr. Bowen says, “I believe when folks die lost, they are annihilated,” while I say, “I believe that once they die lost, they are punished eternally.” When judgment comes, we will find out. But he is just as saved as I am, and I am just as saved as he is. You may marshal verses here and verses there, but it all boils down to your perspective, your presupposition, and how you interpret the Scriptures on that particular matter.

Many, many of the saints have died even in horrible pain with smiles and contentment on their faces. That is for sure. A Jewish historian? He would have been before Timothy was written. In other words, the names of Jannes and Jambres are accurate in 1st Timothy, or 2nd Timothy there, although they are not necessarily recorded in the Old Testament. I know they are accurate because of the divine inspiration of the Bible, but there is also a tradition that those were their names. It is historical peace—Jewish, but it is historical. Father, thank You for Your love and grace. Thank You for Your mercy. Help us in Christ’s name. Amen.

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Chapter 2: Ruling With God
JW00547 | SermonAudio

Chapter 3: The Puritan Hope: An Eschatology of Victory
JW00543 | SermonAudio

Chapter 4: The Puritan Hope: A Reformed Expectation For Success
JW00530 | SermonAudio

Chapter 5: Victory in Jesus Christ
JW00319 | SermonAudio

Chapter 6: The Rapture Of The Wicked
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Chapter 7: The Last Days
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