

# FROM WHERE CHRIST SITS

By

Curtis Dickinson

There is no doubt that we are living in a time of unparalleled crises. The entire economy of the world is threatened, society is in a state of flux, and the face of the earth is changing rapidly. Some astute observers say that the New World Order is already in place and gradually being activated. Some of the most powerful men in the world are also the most evil, who will sacrifice whole nations to maintain their power.

Add to this the fact that there is an all-out effort being made on every level of society to destroy the Christian faith and culture, and you have a good excuse for the aura of fear and timidity that marks the attitude of many people: fear of the future; fear in business — afraid to apply — God's rules and tell the truth; fear of the world — what others may think; and even fear in the pulpit — afraid to speak on the burning issues and afraid of confrontation.

Such fear is a direct contradiction of the teaching of Jesus and the apostles and exhibits a failure to understand the meaning of being a Christian.

Just before His death, Jesus cautioned His disciples, "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be tearful (John 14:27). But after they, had witnessed the terror of the crucifixion of the Son of God, they had cause to be fearful. John writes that when Jesus appeared to them after the resurrection, "the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews" (John 20:19). It wasn't until after the great miracle of Pentecost that the apostles were able to shake their fears and make the gospel known with boldness and joy.

What happened? At Pentecost Peter announced that the pouring forth of the Spirit, Was a result of Jesus being exalted to the throne of David, to the right hand of God (Acts 2:30). Now it was clear what He meant by: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). Now they could understand the statement Jesus made just before His ascension: "All authority has been given unto me in Heaven and on earth" (Matt. 28:19). Whatever the power of the Jews who persecuted them, their Master's power was greater.

To be a believer is more than just to believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God. it is to believe that God has "raised him from the dead, and made him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come" (Eph. 1:20, 21). It is to believe that He now reigns as King of kings, even though this is denied from thousands of pulpits, books and television sets by those who say that the kingdom is yet to come, that He failed the first time, and we must wait for His second coming so He can rule over an earthly kingdom" He did not fail nor postpone His work but was crowned King and will reign "until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).

That isn't all. Paul instructs us that when God saved us, He "raised us up with him and made us to sit with Him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus" (Eph.2:6). Not that we sit with Him in heaven, but that we are established in His presence in the heavenly kingdom here and now. We can enjoy a spiritual, mind-to-mind relationship with the King of heaven and earth. It is not as though our King had left us to face the enemies alone, but through His Spirit He brings us into His presence, and under His mercy and love we enjoy this heavenly privilege constantly. As R. C. H. Lenski says, "All the high and prideful places of the world are dung-heaps compared with the heavenly' places in the kingdom of grace" (*Interpretation of Ephesians*, Augsburg, p. 419).

This is exactly what He meant when He promised, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28:20). He said, 'Abide in me, and I in you" (John 15:4). It is the gist of the gracious invitation in Rev. 3:20: "Behold. I stand at the door and knock: if any man hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." This verse is widely misused as an invitation to alien sinners, to say that all one has to do to be saved is to "invite Jesus in" ignoring the requirements of faith, repentance and obedience to the Gospel. The verse is addressed to the church, to those already in Christ. It is a reminder of the great privileged position that can be enjoyed by every faithful child of God.

From Adam's rebellion against God's order in the garden to the Pharisees' rejection of Jesus in Pilate's court to the present assault on Christ in the arts, literature, and the media, the world seeks to rid itself of the authority of the Creator. A thousand years before Christ's birth David wrote, "The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against Yahweh, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder and cast away their cords from us" (Psalm 2:2, 3). When Christians are the subjects of slander and the objects of persecution, the real target is Jesus, the King. The denial of moral absolutes and the effort to supplant them with the "new morality" along with the claim that moral aberrations are only, "alternate life-styles;" are all part of the age-old conspiracy where rulers take counsel together to break the bonds and cast away the cords of God's laws and unseat His anointed, King Jesus.

We who are "seated with him in the heavenly places" must also share in bearing the brunt of this attack. We may pass through the trial of the world's hatred, as Jesus did. In view of this, Peter wrote, "If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you: because the Spirit of glory and the Spirit of God rests upon you. For let none of you suffer as a murderer, or a thief, or an evildoer, or as a meddler in other men's matters: but if a man suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name" (1 Peter 4:14-16).

This is all the more evidence of Christ's rule, for rebellion only takes place against the one who is in power, as David elsewhere sang, "Rule thou in the midst of your enemies" (Psalm 110:2). And although the final reckoning with His enemies will not take place until He comes again, one can easily see the disastrous results of their attempt at breaking asunder the "bonds" of His commandments. The penalty can be seen everywhere: in the deterioration of freedom, as governments impose regulations to replace God's laws; in

the absence of peace which godliness brings; in the proliferation of diseases, as biblical rules of health are ignored; and in the loss of economic stability because of greed and dishonesty. The violence and suffering which plagues the world is in proportion to man's rebellion against the anointed of Cod and His commandments.

It is under just such conditions that Christ calls us to follow Him, to trust Him and to sit with Him in the heavenly kingdom. While most Americans have come to look to government or to worldly corporations for security, we have no confidence in man nor his power. Our daily bread still comes from God, not from Washington. In the days of the apostle Paul, men were given a choice of allegiance to Nero or to Christ. Paul chose Christ, although he knew Nero had the power to kill him and probably would. But Paul had been raised to sit with Christ, the King of all the earth. He knew no confusion nor fear. He was not a part of the world's chaos. He knew that if the earthly king killed him, the heavenly King would raise him up and give him immortality, and with this faith he said we are "more than conquerors."

Nero never knew victory. His kind will be resurrected only to realize defeat and destruction in the lake of fire. "Thou shall break them with a rod of iron; Thou shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psalm 2:9). Martin Luther, on trial before the Diet of Augsburg in 1530, wrote, "Why should we then fear a conquered world as if it were the conqueror?"

Instead of fearing the Nero's of the world, we are to rejoice in the position given us by grace in Christ Jesus. No longer are we slaves to the world, to its goals and its fashion, nor to its destiny. The world measures success by wealth, health, pleasure and man's recognition. But these have nothing to do with gaining the eternal purpose and, more often than not, actually spell defeat as far as our relationship with God is concerned. Real success is in overcoming the world and pleasing Cod. The crown of success will be the resurrection to immortality in God's image.

Even now we may enjoy His presence as we are seated in the heavenly places in Christ.

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