

THE REIGN OF CHRIST

By

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The apostles and early Christians did not live in a Christian nation, but they were optimistic about life, and were victorious over the world, in spite of its hostility.

This deep faith and spirit of victory began on the Day of Pentecost, when Peter showed how the long-awaited promise of a King to sit on David's throne had been fulfilled by Jesus. Peter first shows that the prophecy by David, concerning the resurrection, was fulfilled in Jesus, and not in David:

“Brethren, I may say unto you freely of the patriarch David, that he both died and was buried and his tomb is with us unto this day. Being therefore a prophet and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins he would set one upon his throne; he foreseeing this spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that neither was he left unto Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus did Clod raise up, whereof we all are witnesses. Being therefore by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured forth this, which you see and hear. (Ed. This refers to the wind, tongues as of fire and miracle of speaking in foreign languages.) For David ascended not into the heavens: but he says himself,

‘The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand,
Until I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet.’ ...

“Let all the house of Israel therefore know assuredly
that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this
Jesus whom you crucified.” (Acts 2:29-36)

ON DAVID'S THRONE

Peter asserts that Jesus was exalted at the right hand of God, meaning that Jesus has been given all authority over all God's creation. “God has made him both Lord and Christ.” This is all past tense. Peter, here in the first century, declares that God has already set Jesus on David's throne, in the place of authority, and that He has already made Jesus Lord over all.

In his sermon before the high priest and the council at Jerusalem Peter repeated this theme (Acts 5:31). This is the high priest who had asked Jesus if He were the Christ. Jesus had answered, “You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matt. 26:64). In this statement Jesus claimed to be the Lord of Psalm 110 and the Son of Man of Daniel 7:13.

Note that Jesus was not suggesting that these prophecies would be fulfilled in some distant future time, but that they would be fulfilled during the lifetime of the people before him – “you shall see.” These men would “see” the Son of Man coming to “the ancient of Days” as described in Daniel 7:13. At that time, according to Daniel, Jesus “was given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him” (Vs.14). The event took place when God “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” (Eph. 1:20, 21), and is the primary reason for the great event of Pentecost (Acts 2:33).

In harmony with Psalms 110, Paul writes that Jesus “must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor.15:25).

WITH OPPOSITION

But how can Jesus be reigning today when there is so much evil in the world? Unable to answer this question, many choose to believe that the “kingdom passages” must be describing a future kingdom when all who oppose Christ will be overthrown.

According to David the Messiah would NOT reign over a world of tranquility, perfect peace, and love, but would reign “in the midst of (His) enemies” (Psalm 110:2). The violence of these enemies is described in Psalm 2:2-3, “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...”

The kings of Israel always faced enemies, sometimes from rebels in their own kingdom, and almost always enemies from surrounding kingdoms. Every ruler, whether king, prime minister, dictator or president, must rule in the midst of enemies who would unseat him and destroy his power and authority.

Jesus, as the universal King has also been confronted with universal rebellion. No earthly ruler has ever had such powerful and well-organized opposition as King Jesus. His enemies have devised every conceivable plan to undermine His authority and destroy His kingdom. The rebellion has intensified in modern times as His enemies have gained control of the TV networks, major newspapers and magazines, as well as influential places in government and education.

His enemies, however, will not prevail. The same Psalm which describes their stand against the Anointed also says that God will “break them with a rod of iron” and “dash them in pieces” (Psalm 2:9).

CHILDREN OF THE KING

Years ago many hymnals included a song entitled “A Child of The King.” It reflected the optimistic encouragement of Christ’s Statement, “You are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14).

The song has all but disappeared and so has the optimism and light. What does the world see in modern Christians? With some beautiful exceptions, the modern church exhibits confusion instead of light and fear instead of faith. The popular idea is that Jesus is not reigning now, but is waiting in the wings watching the world stage as evil increases day by day. At a certain point (a date that modern prophets are always trying to determine), He will come on stage and take charge. In the meantime the devil is the one in control.

This denies the present reign of Christ and results in confusion and fear – fear of government, fear of financial loss, fear of a depression, etc. Churches look to the power of psychological manipulation, rather than to the power of the Gospel, and seek to blend into the world’s lifestyle in order to gain members. The observant world does not see an example of faith in Christ the King but a faith in clever programming and managing.

Christ’s disciples were aware that His teachings were contrary to accepted norms and that to embrace His kingdom would put them at odds with the Roman government. Christian truth and practice have never been “politically correct.”

Knowing their fears, Jesus said, “Fear not little flock, for it is your Father’s good pleasure to give you the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). He condemned fear, saying, “be not anxious for your life...” (Matt. 6:25). In Revelation 21:8, the “fearful” heads the list of those who will be destroyed in the second death. Such fear indicates a lack of faith. How can one fear what is going on in the world when he is a loyal subject of King Jesus Who has dominion over all the world and heaven too?

The enthronement of Jesus at God’s right hand clinches the proof of His redemptive work on earth and the credibility of His promise of a resurrection to immortality.

Like those early Christians, we live in a largely pagan society, filled with corruption and those who are opposed to Christ. Yet our “citizenship is in heaven” (Phil. 3:20), “where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1), and we are part of His kingdom. We must not become so preoccupied with the activities of the enemy that we lose sight of this glorious fact.

The crucial need of the hour is for Christians to lay down our fears and take up the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, and let the world see that we are servants of the King to whom belongs all power and authority. In so doing we will be giving the glory and honor so richly deserved by Jesus, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, and will be helping to defeat His enemies.

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