

Sunday 30th December 2018
Jesus Christ – King

We have been looking at the offices Christ fulfilled by His Incarnation. He is our Prophet, the one who speaks to us supremely from the Father. He is our Priest, the one who offered the perfect sacrifice in the heavenly temple as the perfect and eternal High Priest, and who continues to serve as our intercessor. Now we come to Christ's Office as King.

Psalm two has God speaking, and He tells us that He has set His king in Zion. This King is Christ, exalted to the right hand of the Father, but is God saying that somehow or other, He has not been a King up to this point, but has been in exile or had been deposed? No, this is not what is being spoken about. This Psalm has God the Father speaking as creator and ruler of the cosmos, but refers to the retaking of what was lost in the fall of Adam, taking back the rule of earth and humanity.

When Adam fell into sin, the place and the authority he had been given by God was lost, and Satan usurped his role. For a reason we can't fully understand, God did not rescind this authority, but let Satan assume it for himself to use for his own purposes. The irony is that it was still God's power, but was now in the wrong hands, God was still in control.

This becomes clear when we read Luke 4 v 6-7. This is part of the temptation passage in which Satan attempts to seduce Christ into sin as he had seduced Eve and tempted Adam. At one point, Satan offers Jesus the easy route to regaining the rule of the world. If Jesus will fall down and worship him, he will give the authority to Christ. Satan adds that the authority and the splendor of the kingdoms of the world had been given to him. Two things follow from this encounter.

Jesus does not deny that Satan has this authority, neither does He deny that it had been given to Satan. Who had given it to him? Adam when he fell. This is not the only indication that a catastrophic change of rulership had occurred by the fall. In Corinthians 4v4, Paul refers to Satan as the, 'god of this world.' In Ephesians 2 and v 1-2, Satan is called, 'the ruler of the kingdom of the air.' These terms tell us two things. Firstly that the authority of Satan on earth is full and great. Secondly, it tells us that there is a limit on this power. Psalm 2 has God laughing at the incredible arrogance of man thinking that man can assail God in the heavenly realms, but that arises from Satan claiming a power and authority he does not have. Satan will never assail or overcome God in heaven. He was cast out a long time ago and there is no way back for him!

Satan is no longer in the heavenly realms, he is earthbound, and the authority he usurped extends only over the world as we know it. He cannot stop the sunrise or the sunset, he cannot alter seasons nor determine the end of time. His power is frighteningly great in comparison to our puny muscles and 70 years or so, but it is nothing in comparison to God's power. Indeed, God by weakness, Incarnation, the

Cross, and Resurrection defeated Satan. God's little finger is greater than all the might of Satan, and Satan does not like us discovering this!

In the fall, the inhabited world was made subject to the rule of Satan, and Jesus came as a man, by Incarnation, to take it all back again and rescue us.

Consider a war scenario. If we desired to obliterate an enemy, then we would drop as many atomic bombs on him as we could, or whatever weapons of mass destruction we have. However, if we desire to defeat a tyrant and bring about regime change without destroying the very people we want to rescue, then total and instant destruction of all is not the way to do it. In this scenario, there must be a crushing victory and then a campaign of liberation. This is like 'D' day which eventually led to 'VE' day. Between 'D' day and 'VE' day, some of the fiercest conflict of the war occurred. This is a good analogy of what happens between the Cross and the consummation of the age.

Christ's death and resurrection is the victory that crushed Satan's rule, but the territory must be liberated. Christ is King in heaven at God's right hand and there directs the liberation campaign. Over the ages, we have seen periods where the church has grown and triumphed, and other ages where it all seems to be going backwards. However, the campaign continues, and the consummation of all is closer now than it was when Christ rose from the dead!

Christ said after His resurrection in Matthew 28:18, that all authority in heaven and earth had been given to Him. He had taken it out of Satan's hands and it has been given to Him, hence He rules from heaven. This is the meaning of Psalm 2, it is about God's conquest of the world which Adam forfeited to the devil by his sin.

However, Christ's retaking of the kingship is not a finished and absolute event, it is a progressive process of liberation. 1 Corinthians 15 v 25 tells us this. Christ rules from above and there is a progressive subjugation of all His enemies over a period of time. The word 'until' gives us the clue to there being a passage of time between Christ ascension to the throne and the final overthrow of His enemies. The day will come when all these enemies will be under His feet and then the end will come, and all will be handed back to the Father, task accomplished.

However, in the meantime, we live in this time between the exaltation of Christ and the completion of the mission. This means that we live in an age of conflict and have the hope of a glorious future. We are living between 'D' day and 'VE' day as it were. The theologians speak of this present age as the time of the 'now but not yet.' This is the explanation of some of the statements of Jesus where He tells us of a Kingdom which has come and elsewhere speaks as if the Kingdom were yet to come. Jesus heals someone and says that it is because the Kingdom has come, and yet elsewhere tells us to pray for the Kingdom to come. It all seems very confusing, but it isn't. It means that the Kingdom of God has broken into this present age, but it awaits its consummation, its full manifestation. In the meantime, there is conflict between God's Kingdom which is dawning, and Satan's kingdom which is in its sunset. This is what gives our lives such

difficulty, we live in a world where two kingdoms are present, and at different times one or the other presents as more dominant.

We need to understand these realities or else we will be baffled as to why our lives are as they are, especially if we are Christians. We also need to know what our duty and role are in this state of conflict and how to ensure that we are leaning into the reign of Christ.

Ephesians chapter 6 is the well-known chapter on spiritual conflict both as a personal experience and as the communal experience of the church. In this passage, Paul tells us that our conflict is not against flesh and blood, but against powerful spiritual entities of this dark world, in the heavenly realms. Earthly bound and spirits in the air to you and me. The first step is to be strong in the Lord as the prerequisite to contending with spiritual powers. To be strong in the Lord is to be strong in the revelation of Christ by faith. We are not contending with people, flesh and blood, yet that is what most of the human race do, even in the church. Paul also says in 2 Corinthians 2.11 that, 'we are not ignorant of his devices,' meaning Satan's ways of working. I have to say, that my experience of life is that most Christians are very ignorant of Satan's devices, in fact, multitudes of Christians don't believe in a real Satan, and this itself is one of his devices! Most Christians regard evil as some sort of nebulous force, like an infection that we can avoid if we are careful or recover from naturally. Most Christians do not understand that this evil, has a person behind it and in it and that it is in us too! Even as Christians we are more often moved and ruled by our emotions rather than by the Scriptures and faith.

Have you ever found that when all is going well that we find it easy to sing, 'on Christ the solid rock I stand,' and enjoy reading, 'all things work together for good.' However when trouble, sickness, upset, the crossing of our wills happens, then everything seems to have become an end of the world event? This is because we are not as strong in the Lord as we think we are, and this is precisely the time to exercise and act on faith, even though sight would be more comforting! There are two sorts of sailors. Those who have to keep in sight of the coast at all times or they will get lost. Others have learned to navigate, and can be far from the sight of land without alarm. Most of us get upset and fearful, angry and lose our way if we lose sight of land, of good, happy feelings! This is the fight of faith and the fight for faith and is what God requires of us. We are not alone in this experience. Do you know the Psalm where David said that he would never be moved, but he was!

So what does all this mean for us?

God has made Christ King. It is a done deed by His Incarnation, Death on the Cross and His Resurrection. Christ rules as King until and during the time He subdues His enemies and brings them under His feet. When all His foes are defeated, Christ will return all to the Father. Our duty and call is to align ourselves with the rule of Christ and His Kingdom. This can only be done by believing the Scripture and it is our call and duty to do so. This is not always an easy thing to do. We are so used to living in our emotions and in our reason, that when we are faced with situations which go counter to

our feelings and our reason, we are overwhelmed. To live in the limits of our feelings and the limitations of our natural reason is to live in the flesh. We are called to live by the Holy Spirit and that is the realm of faith. It is by faith we see the heavenly things, not by calculation. Read the history of Abraham. It was not his reason that assured him that he would have a son, but faith in the God who had promised!

This is crucial, because spiritual conflict with spiritual forces can only be done with spiritual weapons. Do you remember that statement in Revelation 12 v 13 Satan is defeated by the blood of the Lamb and the believer's testimony of what the word says the blood of Christ does, and being prepared to hold this even to the death. Our reason and emotions will never enable us to do that. That is why there is so much defeat in our lives, we love our lives more than we love the truth! It is also why the Bible says so much about faith.

The weapons and armor of Ephesians 6 only come by faith and can only be wielded by faith, and by being strong in the Lord. We are not left to wonder how to come to such strength and faith, because many Scriptures tell us how to receive and nurture these graces. One I keep on mentioning, because of its fundamental nature, is found in Acts 2 v 42. Let me remind you of it. The early Christians devoted themselves to the Apostles teaching, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers. This was the activity of those early Christians who turned the world upside down, and it is still the means by which God outworks His purposes. If you doubt this, read the accounts of historical revivals and present day accounts of what the church is giving attention to in regions of significant church expansion. These four activities are top of the list of priorities! When we become casual or negligent in these, then our Christian lives will shrivel up and even though we may run on momentum for some time, we will not do well and faith will fade. If we return to the path of devotedness once more, then grace can flow once more into our lives and the life of the church.

The second thing we must grasp is that this present life is one of conflict with many hardships. This does not mean misery, but it does mean that our hope and joy and rejoicing are to be in God and not in things or circumstances. Things go, are lost, are stolen, they rust or get moldy. Joy and peace in God do not depend on our circumstances, but are from the infinite resources of God. We need to be reconciled that we live in the now but the not yet, in the Kingdom which is here but awaits its full manifestation. We must resolve to live as our fathers have done in faith and patience, having received a Kingdom, but not yet in its fullness.

This is our duty and it is what we are called to. All through this conflict, Christ is King and as Hebrews 2 v 9 says that even though we do not yet see everything in subjection, we see Jesus, crowned with glory and honour. Christ is King of a Kingdom that is increasing, but not yet full. Understand and be reconciled to the nature of this journey we are on.