



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

6420 Churchill Way | Dallas, Texas | 75230 | t 972.239.5371 | believerschapeldallas.org

The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

1 Corinthians 15:20-28

“The Last Adam and His Kingdom - II”

TRANSCRIPT

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee and praise Thee for the gift of the word of God. We thank Thee for the privilege of reading, of thinking the thoughts of our great God after Thee. We thank Thee for the preservation of it. We thank Thee that we're able, each of us, to carry around the word of God. And we thank Thee for all of the means by which we have at our hands to understand the word of God and, above all, of course, the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We thank Thee for the life communicated through the word, the eternal life, that is the gift for those in whose hearts the Holy Spirit is moved and has brought them to trust in our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank Thee for the gift of faith. We thank Thee for the constant care over us. And we thank Thee for each one present here, for their families, for their friends for whom they have concerns. We pray that Thou wilt bless them as they seek to honor our Lord in their lives and represent Him.

We pray particularly for Roy Ferguson's wife and ask Lord Thy blessing upon her and ask that Thou will supply the needs of blood that exist, and we pray that there may be a successful resolution of her illness and restoration to health. We pray for Roy as well. We ask Thy blessing upon him and for others, too, Lord, who are going through serious physical trials. We pray for them. We remember all of them that have asked for

our prayers. We thank Thee for them, for their concerns. We pray, Lord, that Thou wilt answer their prayers, encourage them, strengthen their faith in accordance with Thy will.

We pray for those who are bereaved. We pray particularly for Sue Hogg and her family. We ask Thy blessing upon her and others also, Lord, who have been passing through various types of trials. We commit them to Thee. We thank Thee for the promises of the word of God and ask, Lord, that Thou wilt be with us this evening as we study one of the important and yet difficult passages of the writings of the Apostle Paul.

And we pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

[Message] Well, our subject tonight is the same subject that we have had for the last time or so. This is the second of the studies. We will also be having the same subject next Wednesday night, “The Last Adam and His Kingdom.”

The apostle as you know, in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, has been arguing, first of all, the fact of the resurrection. He has regarded that as very, very important. As a matter of fact, he has said, in effect, that if our Lord has not been raised from the dead, we are in our sins. We do not have eternal life as we have thought that we have had. If our Lord is not resurrected from the dead, then what we have thought our lives to be; that is, trusting in a resurrected savior, is really only equal to what might be called a dream or a fantasy. If Christ is not raised, we are of all men most to be pitied, the apostle states. The unconverted man at least can enjoy his life in the expression of the outworking of his sinful nature. He can have all of the kinds of joys which the writers of the Bible call the joys of sin. They are joys to us. They are not really ultimate joys of course, but they are. And if there is no resurrection, then the unconverted man would seem to be in a better state than the converted.

The converted man says there is nothing here in this society in which I find myself that really is attractive to me because I am attracted by eternal things. I am attracted by our Lord and by His living presence at the right hand of God in heaven. So I do not have

any great hopes for the world about me. I do not have any great longings for the world about me. In fact, one of my hopes is that by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit that I may live a heavenly kind of life while I am here upon the earth. But what a blunder we have made if Jesus Christ has not been raised from the dead.

We have been following what H.A. Ironside calls will-o'-the-wisp, an ignis fatuus, if our Lord has not been raised from the dead. Everything in the Christian life ultimately depends upon that. That’s why it is so important, and that’s why it’s so surprising to me, that large professing orthodox churches deny so often the resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. For the twentieth century, we have constantly had numbers of ministers in some of our leading Protestant churches who have denied and do deny the bodily resurrection. So it’s very much a surprise that that is possible for those who supposedly give assent to the doctrinal statements of their churches, who even repeat some of those doctrinal statements in their Sunday morning ministries which they don’t really believe. That’s extremely startling.

The Apostle Paul, in Romans chapter 16 in verse 7, makes an interesting statement regarding some of his kinsmen. He says, “Now I urge you brethren -- note those who cause divisions,” I am reading the wrong verse. I should say verse 7. I am reading verse 17. “Greet Andronicus and Junia, my countrymen and my fellow prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.” That’s an interesting statement the apostle says that he has relatives who were in Christ before him. In Christ before him would mean simply that they were believers before the apostle became a believer. In fact, if we want to exercise our imagination, we might even say that perhaps the apostle’s conversion is due to some of these relatives or kinsman who were in Christ before him and who prayed for Paul for his conversion. He was breathing out threatenings and slaughter, and they were praying for him. And it’s possible, of course, that their prayers were answered by God, and the apostle was converted.

So he speaks of those who are in Christ before him. But then when he talks here, in 1 Corinthians 15 and Romans chapter 5, he talks about all people being in Adam. So they may have been in Christ before him, but so far as the apostle and they were concerned, they were all in Adam at the same time. And when Adam in the Garden of Eden committed his sin, as you know, the race fell. And the apostle makes reference to that in our passage when he says in verse 21,

“For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

A statement that a French commentator made I repeated last week. It is for man to repair the damage done by man. That is what I think Paul means when in verse 22 he said, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” Men fell in Adam, and those who do possess eternal life, have eternal life because by God’s grace they have been brought into relationship with Jesus Christ. They have become in him.

Now, Paul has also said in verse 20, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” And then in verse 22, “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.”

Now, we made the point that that statement, “all made alive” does not mean that they will be or have been resuscitated, but, rather, this is a reference to the resurrection. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” And it’s in Christ, so he is talking about the believers who, by virtue of Christ’s resurrection, are made alive. He’s not talking about a universal resurrection. That, of course, is a genuine Biblical doctrine taught in other places. But the prepositional phrase here “in Christ” is most easily associated with those who are believers in Christ.

Now, this passage at this point has already given us the idea of an order that’s implicit in the passage. He’s talked about Christ’s resurrection. He’s talked about our

resurrection, and so there is implicit an order here because we were not raised when Christ was raised. But the idea of order, which is implicit in the passage, Paul makes very definite here. And so I am going to read verse 23 through verse 25. These are the verses we’ll look at tonight in some detail.

The apostle writes,

“But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming. Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.”

Now, I must stop at this point and make a correction in the translation of the New King James Version. The text says, “Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father.” That’s perfectly all right. But the rendering of the next verb “when He puts an end to” in the present tense is in error. This should be a future perfect. As a matter of fact, some of you translations that reflect this. So let me render it, “Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when he shall have put an end to all rule and all authority and power.” In other words, the bringing to an end of all rule and all authority and all power precedes the delivering of the kingdom to God the Father. I think the New International Version renders this as “after.” So that order is important if we are to understand the section.

And then verse 25 our last verse,

“For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.”

So here we have then questions of the nature of the kingdom, and the questions arise with reference to the future and particularly of the kind of kingdom that is to come to pass in the future. Is it a millennial kingdom or is it some other kind of kingdom or is

it even possible that this kingdom is a present kingdom? In the course of our exposition particularly next week, we will deal more with that question.

But, verse 23 is our first text this evening. The first verse and here the apostle says, “But each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming” This little word that begins verse 23 “but” introduces what might be called an explanatory qualification. He says, “That those who are in Christ shall be made alive.” But to add a qualification, in case you may think because all who are in Christ are going to be raised on account of Christ that they will all be raised at the same time, the apostle makes a qualification, first Christ; afterward, those who are Christ’s at his coming. So there is an order in the resurrection process, first Christ, then those who are his at his coming. So we have the death process of Adam, men, Christ, each in his own order. He’s trying to answer the question perhaps that people might ask. If we preach the resurrection someone might say to us, you say that everyone is to be raised because Christ has been raised. But we are dying, aren’t we? Who has been resurrected except Christ? We are dying. You die. I die. So the natural question would arise, If it’s true that all in Christ shall be made alive, why are we all dying?

Now, I know you have been instructed in Christian theology. You don’t have thoughts like in your mind, of course. If you’ve been at Believer’s Chapel, you’re supposed to know all of these things, but the facts are, we don’t. And so the apostle has put this in the word of God because it is a common kind of question that people ask. We talk about all that Christ has done, but look around. I see nothing but the evidence of aging and decay. And you tell me you’re alive, and you tell me that you’re going to have a resurrection. But I may stand at your graveside and you have died just like the man outside of Christ. So the apostle is answering a natural question. He is saying there is an order in the resurrection process. That’s the meaning of the statement here in verse 23, but each in his own order. Don’t think because you are a Christian and you are destined

to be made alive in Christ that it’s now, that perhaps you have missed everything somehow. No, each in his own order.

Christ the firstfruits, that should be the encouragement. That’s the guarantee that those who are in him will be raised. He’s the firstfruits. Remember our illustration of the barley harvest in the fall. Every fall the children of Israel went out into the barley harvest, cut down a number of sheaves, brought them in, waved them before the Lord in the temple. Now, those sheaves spoke a double message. First of all, the harvest, of course, suggesting the people, but they spoke the message of an earnest. The fact that those sheaves were cut and brought in and waved before the Lord was an earnest of other sheaves out in the fields, the common fields. This is an illustration. Those feasts were designed to be illustrations of spiritual truths. So it was an earnest, a guarantee, that there was other sheaves of grain in the field.

Furthermore, it was not simply an earnest, but because they were sheaves from the same harvest, that is, those that were waved before the Lord and those that were in the field. It was specifically stated remember it should be a common field, not something special, because that might suggest some of us are going to participate and others are not. But it was a common field. The second thing that it signified was that those sheaves, because they are the same kind of sheaves as those that were waved before the Lord, it signified that there was an earnest of the resurrection in Christ’s resurrection, and his resurrection is a sample of ours. We have the same kind of resurrection he has. He had a bodily resurrection. We have a bodily resurrection. He was glorified in his resurrection. We are to be glorified.

So Christ’s resurrection is the firstfruits, and like the firstfruits that’s an earnest of others, those are in Christ and also a sample of what is to be our experience. Now, isn’t that wonderful? Think of it. Think of it, all of us who look in the mirror and see we are decaying. We are going to have, as Paul says in Philippians, a body like unto his own

glorious body. We are sure to have it because he is the firstfruits, and we are to have it just like his.

Now, that’s enough to be really happy about. In fact, we could declare an intermission and shout and holler a little bit. That would be perfectly all right, I’m sure. May be out of order, but nevertheless it would be unheard of in Believer’s Chapel, too. [Laughter] But not down in the heart.

Christ, the firstfruits but each in his own order. Now that’s a military term. That was a term that was used for a division, a group of soldiers, even larger group of soldiers, that tagma was a division. It came to mean simply a class, that is a body of people, a class, a division. “Each in his own order.” Well, there is one good thing about being in this order. It’s a military term. I always wanted to be in Stonewall Jackson’s division. So I am going to be in his division. A believing man, he is to be given his body just at the same time I am, and we are going to be in the same division. Yankees are not real happy over that, but we Southerners, we like to be associated with the great men, and when he receives his glorified body, there will be others, others of the saints there with him for he was a genuine believing man. “Each in his own division.” “Each in his own body,” Paul says.

“Each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming.” Each in his own order, of course, underlines the fact of the necessity of our resurrection. He’s the first, and then those who have fallen asleep in him are to be raised. This is designed, I say, to answer that problem of the fact that people are dying around us. I am sure that it went into the minds and hearts of many people as they thought about the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the things the apostle said about it. Those that people like Paul said his resurrection is the guarantee of our resurrection and because he has been resurrected, we are going to have a glorious body like his. They’re troubled, no doubt troubled, among themselves with themselves over these matters.

In the Old Testament there were many things that troubled the saints of the Old Testament. Psalm 73 is one of the great illustrations of it. You remember that Psalm begins, “Truly God *is* good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart. But as for me, my feet had almost stumbled; My steps had nearly slipped. For I *was* envious of the boastful, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.” You needn’t go down the whole story, but I’ll just read a few verses. He says, “For *there are* no pangs in their death, their strength *is* firm. They *are* not in trouble *as other* men, nor are they plagued like *other* men. Therefore pride serves as their necklace;” They really had self-esteem. “Violence covers them *like* a garment. Their eyes bulge with abundance; They have more than heart could wish. They scoff and speak wickedly *concerning* oppression; They speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walks through the earth.”

And then the Psalmist says, as he looks at himself, and realizes that he doesn’t seem to be sharing in the blessings that these are sharing in. He says, “Surely I’ve cleansed my heart in vein.” Maybe I’ve made a blunder. Maybe I’ve made a blunder by associating myself with these people who are looking for the coming of the Messiah. “All day long I have been plagued, and chastened every morning. “Perhaps I’m not in God’s favor after all.” And then of course, he writes the significant words “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; *Then* I understood their end. Surely You set them in slippery places; You cast them down to destruction. Oh, how they are *brought* to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when *one* awakes, *So*, Lord, when You awake, You shall despise their image.

Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind. I *was* so foolish and ignorant; I was *like* a beast before You.” To think, that God was not truly good to those who trust in Him. That’s the lesson of the Psalm and it seems to me one of the things Paul is talking about. There are those who talk about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but we are dying. We are dying constantly, all of us. Century after century, all of the saints have died. To my knowledge, there isn’t one saint living that was living at that time. Do

you know any? No, you don’t. None, not a one, the hope of the resurrection, not a single one has survived who had the hope of the resurrection. Ah, what you need to do is to do what the Psalmist did. He went into the sanctuary. That is where the word of God is, and then he came to understand their latter end. That Psalm ends by the way, I don’t have time to talk about it, with four or five great promises that he has come to understand belong to him, now.

So, “Each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming.” Now, it is very important for us to notice one thing at this point. We will deal especially with it next week, I think. “Each one in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those *who are* Christ’s at His coming.” The American Standard Version has “then those that are Christ’s at his coming.” The New Authorized Version has “afterward,” the Greek word probably is more literally rendered “then.” In other words, Christ the firstfruits, then those who are Christs at his coming. What’s the difference in time between “Christ the firstfruits, or then those at him coming?” What is the difference in time? Well, to this moment it has stretched to over nineteen hundred years. In other words, that little word “then” now encompasses nineteen hundred years. In a moment, we are going to read “then comes the end.” And so it is not inconceivable that we will have another lengthy interval that may ensue in this resurrection program that Paul is talking about. In other words, sufficient to encompass a kingdom of God upon the earth, for that matter. But, again, I say we will have more to say about that next week.

So afterward those who are Christs at his coming. What coming is he talking about? Well, it’s always best, in studying the Bible, to look at the context. It the easiest hermeneutical rule to follow, and it’s one of those that is so often forgotten. Where and what is the reference to the coming? Well, look at verse 50 of this same chapter. “Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed.” Hallelujah, changed. Some of you are looking so sad now.

You look up at me. I am glad you are going to be changed. We shall all be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye at the last trumpet for the trumpet will sound and dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. “For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal *must* put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: *‘Death is swallowed up in victory.’*” That’s the coming in this very context.

So afterward or then, those who are Christ’s at his coming. The time, of course, we don’t know. It’s stretched now for nineteen hundred years. And so we look for his coming. We know this. It’s nineteen hundred years closer than it was when the apostle wrote these words. That should be an encouragement to us. It is to me. I look at myself and I know I do not have many more years to be alive when our Lord returns. And I know he is not waiting for me, especially. So I hope it’s nineteen hundred and one or two years, or whatever it is.

Now, verse 24 he speaks of the goal of the resurrection program. “Then *comes* the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, (after or) when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.” This technically is what is called a futurum exactum, that is a future perfect. And that’s its meaning and there isn’t any question about it. He’s saying that first, he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. Then, he delivers the kingdom to God the Father, so the relationship between these two “when” clauses in verse 24 must be reversed in our thinking. Then *comes* the end, when He puts an end when he puts an end to all rule and all authority and power, when he then delivers the kingdom to God the Father.”

Now, first then, “then comes the end.” This is a sequential word, so we are talking about a sequence of events. “Then comes the end.” I wish he had made absolutely certain what the end is. It’s very difficult to be certain. I must confess. I don’t want to be dogmatic about it. And I’ll leave it a little bit. All I can be sure of is that he is

talking about the mediatorial mission of the Son of God, after all that’s the story or his life isn’t it. He is the mediator. There is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, and he has come as the mediator representing me and representing the Godhead, and he has offered the atoning sacrifice on Calvary’s cross. But his work is not finished. He is still the mediatorial king of kings, lord of lords. And what he died for includes the kingdom of God. And so his mediatorial mission is still in effect. It’s a rescue operation. Rescue operation? Rescue for whom? You. You and me. That’s why he came to win our salvation. That’s why he lives now at the right hand of the Father as the great high priest. He wants to bring to pass everything for which he died. That’s why, like the high priest in the Old Testament, bore the tribes of the children of Israel upon his shoulders and upon his breast because he represented them, incidentally no Gentiles, no Babylon, no Assyria, none of the other nations, the children of Israel were on his shoulder and on his breast for the high priest represented God’s people. Our great high priest in heaven represents his people, too. The people of God. They are the ones he represents. They are the ones he prays for. They are the ones he is praying for at this very moment. He is their high priest. And he is the mediator, and he will bring to a successful conclusion all of his mediatorial work.

C.K. Barrett is one of the better of the modern commentators on the New Testament. And Dr. Barrett, who was professor for a number of years of New Testament, is still living, I think. I used to -- I have heard him give lecture in Britain. He has written an excellent commentary on Romans, on 1 Corinthians. He has written a number of other books. He puts it this way. He said the Son of God has been entrusted with the mission on behalf of his father whose sovereignty has been challenged. That is, the Father’s sovereignty has been challenged and at least, to some extent, usurped by rebellious powers. Who usurped the Father’s powers? Humanity. Humanity. When we fell in the Garden of Eden, we took into our own hands the operation of his creation, and we have been doing that down to the present day. He goes on to say, it’s for him, that is the son,

to reclaim this sovereignty by overcoming the powers, overthrowing his enemies, recovering the submission of creation as a whole. This mission, he will in due course execute death being the last adversary to hold out. And when it is completed, he will hand the government of the universe back to his Father. That’s a pretty nice summary of what we are talking about here that which the apostle himself is talking about, too.

“Then comes the end.” Probably not the end of the resurrection process, because it’s seems to go beyond that. Probably not the end of the physical world, because that’s not in the context, but essentially the goal of the mediatorial kingdom program. In other words, the end is the end of the divine program of the mediatorial recovery of the kingdom of God. First of all, when he has put an end to all rule and authority and power -- this is the one that precedes the others -- the goal of all is the glorification of the Father by the Son, preceding it of course is to put an end to all rule and all authority and power. That lies in the future when our Lord comes at his second advent. And the Bible gives some marvelous descriptions of what is going to take place when the Lord Jesus comes to the earth again and destroys the hostile human power directed toward him and his purposes. And then following that, the delivery of the kingdom to God the Father.

So the Son will come, having destroyed all rule, authority, and power will give the kingdom to the Father in successful completion of the divine program.

There’s such a marvelous statement made by another of the older commentators that I want to read it to you and try to underline a few things in it. He writes with reference to it, Then the rest of the section” -- the author, he is discussing verse 24, where we are now -- the rest of the section through verse 28, this author said, is an explanation of the giving up of the kingdom by the Son to the Father. And it rests on this weighty verity, the kingdom of Christ over this world, in its beginning, its furtherance, and its completion has one great end. Notice this, pay attention to it. The kingdom has one -- the handing over the kingdom to the Father has one great end, one great purpose, the glorification of the Father by the Son. The Son having destroyed all authority, rule, and

power hands the kingdom back to the Father in glorification of the whole divine program which the Father has initiated and has carried out through the ministry of the second and third persons of the trinity. Therefore he says, when it shall be fully established every enemy overcome, everything subjected to him, he will not reign over it and abide its king but deliver it up to the Father. Hence, as in verse 25, his reign will endure not like that of earthly kings, when he shall have put all enemies under his feet, but only till he shall have, as the text of Scripture says, put an end to all rule and all authority and power. What a king, who is not so much interested in ruling himself as that the Father may have ultimate authority.

He goes on to write some things that are rather interesting about the Lord Jesus Christ. You might think that this may cast some shadows on the coequality of the Son of God with the Father or the coeternity of the Son of God or the eternity of his humanity. It does not. The Son is coequal with the Father. He is coeternal with the Father and the human nature of our Lord having been brought into existence is eternal. That is, our Lord shall always be the Godman. Isn’t that striking? This is the second person of the trinity who in the eternity of the ages upon ages, upon ages, upon ages, upon ages -- I’ve only given the first five or six or them. The ages of the ages has been the second person of the trinity without a human nature, without a human nature. In point of time took to him a human nature, a human body. And in that became wedded to human nature forever, forever. The eternal second person of the trinity taking to himself this nature, retaining it forever to be one with us as a human being, with a human nature, I should say -- divine being with a human nature. That’s astonishing. That’s hard to grasp. I know the thing that presses down upon me is the marvelous blessing of our Triune God taking humanity, in a sense, into the Godhead in that sense, forever. My Christian friend, what a privilege it is to be a Christian. What an important standing forever we have. How important it is that you truly know Jesus Christ as your own personal savior and Lord. This is something that is eternal in its significance.

He adds some other things, too. He says for that humanity ever was and is subordinate to the Father and it by no means follows that when the mediatorial kingdom shall be given up to the Father, the humanity in which that kingdom was won shall be put off. In other words, when he delivers the kingdom up, he doesn’t say, Well, I’m going to lay my humanity aside now. I don’t need that anymore. No. He’s the eternal mediator. That’s very, very difficult to fully understand. What I understand has my heart leaping with joy, but I know there is far more to it. He says, nay, the very fact of Christ in the body being the firstfruits of the resurrection proves that his body as ours will endure forever as the truth that our humanity, even in glory, can only subsist before God by virtue of His humanity makes it plain the he will be very man to all eternity.

The final verse that we are looking at is the 25th verse. You know, some people say they don’t really like Christian theology. I must say I have great pity for you if you don’t understand the importance of Christian theology. Christian theology, after all, is just the word of God. That’s all it is. It’s just the truth of the word of God. I’ve often given this. I keep this in my Bible because I need it so often. I have so many people tell me, you know, we don’t want theology. We want something practical. What could be more practical than this?

Listen to what one of our great theologians said, “What after all is peculiar to Christianity is not the religious sentiment in its working but its message of salvation. In a word, it’s doctrine. To be indifferent to doctrine is thus but another way of saying we are indifferent to Christianity. If that doesn’t strike home, then try this: there are two chief points of view from which the right of doctrinal Christianity is denied by leading theologians of our day. He’s writing in the earlier part of the twentieth century. The watchword of one of these schools of thought is that Christianity consists of facts not dogmas, that of the other is that Christianity consists of life not doctrine. Then he says, A fact without doctrine is simply a fact not understood. That’s why we have Christian doctrine. It’s the understanding of the facts of Christianity, that’s all it is, the

understanding of those facts. A Christian who is not interested in doctrine is not interested in Christianity. He may think he is, but he’s not really.

I’m very thankful for R.C. Sproul and the Ligonier men. I was associated with them in the conference here in Dallas, and I read their materials. It’s very great. I’m glad we have people around like R.C. Sproul and those associated with him. But I think I mentioned this to you, it just fits right in here because they are great on doctrine, but what do I find in their last two numbers, a testimony from a woman. It’s not woman as over against a man. It’s just the testimony of a woman. And she is telling how much the Ligonier conference has meant to her. And she says something like this, not a whole lot of doctrine, but things practical for us. That’s her praise. Now, I’m not surprised she said that. What I am surprised about is those Ligonier people put that in their monthly magazine because that’s exactly what they don’t stand for. I have some other friends who have seen it too and are writing them letters telling them please take that statement out of the monthly magazine because it’s saying just the opposite of what you are trying to do in your meetings.

Now, verse 25, “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.” Notice the little word “for.” This explains the rationale of the earthly kingdom of God, the how and why of it. “For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet.” He must. Why must he? Well, because the Scriptures say that he must. In fact, as you know, the New Testament uses two passages of Scripture that have to do with the earthly kingdom of God. In Hebrews chapter 2 and Hebrews chapter 1, 1 Corinthians here in chapter 15; Psalm 8:6, and Psalm 110 verse 1, “The Lord said to my Lord sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies the footstool of our feet,” the most quoted text, I believe, in the New Testament. Those two texts say that there is to be a kingdom of God upon the earth. So that’s why our author says for he must, he must reign. The Scriptures demand this. Notice verse 27, “For he has put all things under his feet.” That’s from

Psalm 110, Psalm 8, and Hebrews chapter 2 fits in with that, too. So he must, the ultimate source of the necessity is the word of God.

Dr. Ironside has a very interesting illustration in which he seeks to illustrate what it means to have a mediator and to have something that would fit what we have with man created in the image of God placed in the Garden, given control over the earth, told to rule and reign over the earth, to govern in the earth, man’s fall, and then the recovery by the man, the man Christ Jesus. Dr. Ironside goes on to say, suppose a business in San Francisco is owned by a firm of three persons in New York City. They send a manager out to take charge of the business, but this manager proves to be dishonest and incompetent and the business has inextricable difficulties. One member says, you allow me to go out and act as receiver, and I’ll try to straighten everything up and put the business on its feet. So he goes out there. He takes charge of everything, goes over all the books, finds out where the crookedness has been, if you can see the parallel here. The crookedness is Adam in the Garden of Eden of course who’s given the business and told to rule and reign upon the earth. The three persons who are in the other places are disturbed over it. It may take months perhaps years before he straightens things out but after everything is cleared, every bill is paid, there are no longer any liabilities, he goes back to New York, presents his account, hands it back to the firm then he asks a question, “Does he cease to have interest in it?”

In other words, after our Lord has finished his mediatory word and ascends back into the presence of God, does he therefore have no more interest in what has been transpiring down upon the earth? No. He’s a member of the firm, and the firm takes complete charge and he no longer exercises administration mediatorially. This universe to explain the parable is put under the dominion of Adam. God created him in innocence and put him in charge and said to him, I’ve given you authority over everything but through being deceived by Satan through incompetency, dishonesty, the whole was thrown into turmoil and so our blessed Lord Jesus, one of the eternal trinity, is coming

back to this world and will take charge of things. And when everything has been subjected to God and all the wicked and utterly impenitent have been dealt with, he will hand it back to the Father that God may be all in all. Shall we then lose our savior? No, we’ll not lose our savior because he is always our savior and will maintain that relationship to the end of eternal time which has no end.

So to sum up -- to close because we are right at the end. He must reign. When does the reign begin? Well, at his resurrection or the resurrection of the saints? Not at his resurrection because death was not conquered at this resurrection. The sense of the Epistle to the Hebrews use of these passages of Scripture is that the rule is future. In other words, Christ’s role is to bring about this destruction of death through the resurrection and through his reigning in which he will ultimately deliver everything to the Father.

And finally, he states that there till he must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet. Our Lord does not reign forever his mediatorial reign is a set mediatorial reign. He hands the reigns of the reign back into the hands of the Father that God: Father, Son and Spirit, may be all in all. We’ll talk about that more next time.

So the mediatorial kingdom is limited. The subject of put is the son. And its parallel with puts an end in verse 24. And the “until” clause of Psalm 110 is emphasized only here in the New Testament incidentally -- until, that part of that verse. He must reign until he has put all enemies under his feet. One of the commentators has said that his reign takes time. He must go on reigning until he has put, as he said, all authority, all power, all rule under his feet. His reign takes a lot of time, and it seems that it’s a time of war. Well, that’s what the Bible does tell us about the reign of our Lord upon the earth. So what a magnificent passage. He must reign till he has put all enemies under his feet.

And next week, the Lord willing, we will take a look at verse 26 through verse 28, the last three verses of our nine-verse section, one of the great and a difficult section of the apostle’s writing.

If by chance, there are some in this audience tonight who do not have the hope of the resurrection, and therefore, have no hope of forgiveness of sins because he who suffered for sin and was raised on the third day, is the only hope for sinners, it’s only through the shedding of his blood and the payment of the penalty for sin that anyone shall have eternal life only through him. If you are here and you do not have that hope, then eternal life is not your present possession. Our hope, of course, is that it is yours.

This afternoon I went out and hit a few golf balls out at the golf range. And there was an elderly man who was there, too, and we began to talk. And we talked about spiritual things, and he told me that he was an Episcopalian. We had an interesting talk, a very nice man. And he had heard about some of the independent churches in the city and knew of them. And so he got around to what his hope was, and his hope, I must say, was very pitiable. His hope was essentially, after all in the final analysis it’s how we live that counts. If we have been good citizens, good people, then of course we have hope with reference to the future. And I tried to point out to him that it’s more than that because though his own church and other churches that he had spoken about, because he had had some contact with several other churches. Those churches stood for some Biblical doctrine. He said, Oh, well, of course. Yes, of course. Yes. It was obvious that that was not a living faith in his heart. I hope maybe we will have a chance to meet again and have further discussion. But at least I was able to bring attention, of his attention to the fact that it is only through that which Christ has done by which we possibly can have any hope of forgiveness of sins even if we are church members.

Let’s bow in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of study of Scripture. We thank Thee for this great section. We know that the apostle has written a very difficult section, give us understanding. We know the major points that he makes, that Christ has been raised from the dead, that our salvation depends upon what he has done. We have the

hope also of his coming, and we have the hope of the conclusion by our great God in heaven of the purposes which Thou hast had for this earth. We look forward to the marvelous consummation of the purposes of the ages. Enable us, Lord, in our life, in our part of this purpose to be servants useful to Thee. Give us, Lord, the opportunities to spread the knowledge of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We pray in his name. Amen.