

Jesus Is Reigning (Matt 26.57-68)

I. THE NEED TO LOOK AT JESUS' PRESENT REIGN

- A. Many times, Christians do not spend much time thinking about the *present reality* of Jesus Christ's ministry. We spend time thinking of his life, his death, his resurrection, and potentially his coming — but rarely do we think of what Jesus is presently doing.
- B. Yet, the reality of Christ's ascension and session (name for the present reign of Jesus) is a profoundly important part of his person and ministry. The reality of Jesus' present reign has far reaching implications for understanding the authority of Jesus and the ministry of the Church in this world.
- C. Taking time to become familiar with the truths of Jesus' ascension and session should fill us with faith, activate deep confidence in us, and remind us of the glorious truths of who Christ Jesus is.
- D. These truths will also remind us of the essential need to respond to Christ in faith and submitted obedience throughout our lives.

II. YOU WILL SEE THE SON OF MAN SEATED AT THE RIGHT HAND OF POWER (MATT 26.64)

⁶²And the high priest stood up and said, "Have you no answer to make? What is it that these men testify against you?" ⁶³But Jesus remained silent. And the high priest said to him, "I adjure you by the living God, tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God." ⁶⁴Jesus said to him, "You have said so. But I tell you, from now on you will see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven." (Matt 26.62-64)

- A. This statement at Jesus' trial gives us an important insight into the nature of the cosmic significance of Jesus' death, resurrection, and exaltation to the right hand of God.
- B. In this moment, Jesus is specifically asked by the high priest if he believes himself to be the Christ (the Messiah/Anointed one). The high priest is asking Jesus if he is claiming to be the one sent by God to bring salvation and redemption to the people of Israel.
- C. Although Jesus allowed his disciples to identify him as the Christ (Matt 16.16), and this became one of the most common titles of Jesus in the early church, Jesus did not identify himself regularly as the Christ in his life. This is likely because of the nature of *false expectations* related to the Messiah that were held by the people of his day.
- D. Jesus responds to the high priest by declaring that the events transpiring in front of his eyes would lead to him seeing (*from now on*) the Son of Man exalted to the right hand of God himself and coming with the clouds of heaven.
- E. **Son of Man:** This title is one that Jesus uses most to describe himself. The term "son of man" allowed Jesus himself to define the scope of his ministry *while* using a term that was ambiguous enough for him to define.
- F. Although Jesus had used the term "Son of man" throughout his ministry, there was enough clear meaning in this statement to cause the high priest to believe he was blaspheming. Whatever Jesus is saying in this moment is considered severe enough by the religious leadership to be worthy of condemning him to death.

⁶⁵Then the high priest tore his robes and said, "He has uttered blasphemy. What further witnesses do we need? You have now heard his blasphemy. ⁶⁶What is your judgment?" They answered, "He deserves death." (Matt 26.65-66)

- G. Because of this, we must look at the backdrop of Jesus' words in order to interpret their significance. These words demonstrate an important aspect of Jesus' self-understanding related to both *who he is* and *the importance of his ministry and role* in God's redemptive plans.

III. THE SON OF MAN: GOD'S ETERNAL PURPOSE FOR A HUMAN KING

- A. To understand the purposes of God for a human king to reign over all creation, we must seek to understand God's intentional design for the whole of creation and his purposes for humanity.
- B. Genesis 1-2 outline a portrait of God's intentional care to create a "Garden-Temple" where he would dwell and meet with his people. Within this temple created for his dwelling and his glory, he placed an **image bearer** who was responsible to live in intimate communion with him and act as a ruler over all of created order.

²⁶Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." ²⁷So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. ²⁸And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion..." (Gen 1.26-28)

- C. The concept of being made in the image and likeness of God speaks of two realities:
 - 1. **Capacity for relationship with God:** being made in the image and likeness of God speaks of humanity's ability to relate to God and receive from him the gift of his life, his presence, and his love.
 - 2. **Role of acting as a sovereign over creation:** being made in the image and likeness of God also speaks of a specific role of *partnering* with God in his creation to bring forth his purposes in accordance with his will.
- D. The reality of Adam's sin brought profound curses in relation to both his capacity for relationship with God and his role over created order. Sin brought **alienation and separation from God** (death, judgment, wrath) as well as a **futility and death in creation** (curses upon *fruitfulness* and *work*).
- E. To understand this helps us to understand the nature of the unfolding redemptive purposes of God. From the earliest times of God's promises for redemption, he outlines both the promises for a coming Savior (to give forgiveness for sin and restore communion with God) as well as the promises for a coming King who would judge God's enemies and establish the rule and reign of God over all of creation.

¹⁰The scepter [royal rule] shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples. (Gen 49.10)

- F. After establishing the kingdom of Israel through Saul, God makes a covenant to David that there would be a son from his line who would rule forever over God's household.

¹²When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom... ¹³I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever... ¹⁶And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Sam 7.12-16)

²⁹I will establish his offspring forever and his throne as the days of the heavens. (Ps 89.29)

- G. The Psalms are filled with promises of God's design to set a Davidic king over all of the earth to rule in righteousness and justice forever.

⁶As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. ⁷I will tell of the decree: The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you. ⁸Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. ⁹You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel." (Ps 2.6-9)

⁴what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? ⁵Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor, ⁶you have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet (Ps 8.4-6)

⁶Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; ⁷you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness. Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions (Ps 45.6-7)

¹Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the royal son! ...⁸May he have dominion from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth! ...¹⁷May his name endure forever, his fame continue as long as the sun! May people be blessed in him, all nations call him blessed! (Ps 72.1, 8, 17)

¹The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool." ²The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies! (Ps 110.1-2)

H. Throughout the Old Testament, God promised that he would send an **Anointed King** to judge his enemies and bring in his reign of everlasting righteousness. The reality of God's eternal kingship *expressed* by the rule of his anointed king would be one of the primary evidences of God's final act of salvation as outlined and expected throughout the Old Testament (cf. Num 24.17; Isa 9.6-7; 11.1-5; Jer 23.5-6; Amos 9.11-12; Mic 5.2-5).

I. No passage speaks of this as potently as Daniel 7. In this passage, God shows Daniel the reality of the kingdom of God being given over to a figure *like the son of man* who would come to the Ancient of Days on the clouds to be given an eternal kingdom. This would happen in the *midst* of the rule of wicked and evil kings (represented by beasts).

¹³I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. ¹⁴And to him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed. (Dan 7.13-14)

J. It is this passage that gives the clearest backdrop for Jesus' statement to the high priest in Matthew 26. Jesus is declaring that the events that are unfolding in his trial and death (and soon in his resurrection and exaltation) are the **fulfilment of Daniel 7**.

K. Elsewhere in the Gospels, we see that Jesus understands that in his ministry the *age of God's kingdom* is breaking into the world in and through him.

¹⁴Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, ¹⁵and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1.14-15)

IV. JESUS' ASCENSION AND SESSION

A. Jesus' statement is intended to demonstrate that he understands in the events surrounding his death and resurrection two realities will come to pass.

1. First, he demonstrates that he will be **exalted to the right hand of God** (see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of Power). This truth represents the reality of Jesus' exaltation as Lord and King over all creation.

2. Second, we see that Jesus understands that his death and resurrection qualify him to **judge the wicked and establish God's eternal kingdom** (coming on the clouds of heaven). This speaks of what Jesus will accomplish at his second coming when he brings God's redemptive purposes to their full consummation.

B. These two realities are so intricately connected that Jesus can identify them as *one reality* in God's redemptive economy — even though they will be separated by nearly two-thousand years.

C. The Bible often speaks about prophetic realities in God's redemptive purposes as *one event* even when there may be some separation between stages of their fulfillment (this is called *near / far* fulfillment — e.g., mountains in a mountain range).

- D. The early church quickly understood that in the resurrection and ascension of Jesus that God had acted to exalt him to the right hand of Power and set him as the universal king over all of creation.
- E. After his resurrection, Jesus understands that all authority has been given to him in heaven and on earth — likely demonstrating his understanding of fulfilling Daniel 7.

¹⁶Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷And when they saw him they worshiped him, but some doubted. ¹⁸And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.” (Matt 28.16-18)

- F. Paul understands that Jesus has been raised to the right hand of God, seated above every other authority, power, and dominion.

²⁵For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. ²⁶The last enemy to be destroyed is death. ²⁷For “God has put all things in subjection under his feet.” (I Cor 15.25-26)

²⁰[the power] he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²²And he put all things under his feet (Eph 1.20-22)

⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil 2.9-11)

- G. The author of Hebrews demonstrates that even though the universal fulfillment of Psalm 8 has not yet occurred, we see the exaltation of Jesus as the guarantee of the universal fulfillment.

⁸Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. ⁹But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. (Heb 2.8-9)

- H. Revelation shows Jesus coming to the Father to enact and fulfill his purposes on the earth from the time of his ascension until his coming.

¹Then I saw in the right hand of him who was seated on the throne a scroll written within and on the back, sealed with seven seals. ²And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming with a loud voice, “Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?” ... ⁵And one of the elders said to me... “Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals.”... ⁹And they sang a new song, saying, “Worthy are you to take the scroll and open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, ¹⁰and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” (Rev 5.1-10)

¹Now I watched when the Lamb opened one of the seven seals... (Rev 6.1)

V. THE IMPORTANCE OF JESUS’ REIGN

- A. Jesus is presently *reigning as King* over all creation

1. As the author of Hebrews invites us to see, we can *right now* look at the resurrected Messiah (by faith) and be certain that he is ruling and reigning over all creation.
2. This truth invites us to be confident that no matter what we are experiencing in this world, that Jesus is *presently winning*. He is perfectly and fully accomplishing the exact plan of God that is leading all of human history to its point of full consummation.

3. Revelation 6 invites to see that the fulfillment of God's redemptive purposes *include* trouble and tribulation. The presence of these realities does not mean that he is not accomplishing his purposes.
4. Paul situates the present reign of Christ as our source of meditation and strength as we walk through this life — actively setting our minds on the things above *by faith*.

¹If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. ²Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. (Col 3.1-2)

B. Jesus is presently *reigning through his church*

1. The New Testament authors understand that the primary way that Jesus expresses his reign on the earth between his comings is *through* the ministry of his church.
2. Jesus situates the Great Commission in his receiving all authority in heaven and earth. Many commentators have understood the Great Commission as a *recasting* of the initial 'dominion' mandate given to Adam and Eve.

¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age. (Matt 28.19-20)

3. Paul relates the present reign of Christ to his headship over the body who is his fullness in the earth.

²²And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. (Eph 1.22-23)
4. It is important to understand that the *primary* way that Jesus expresses his kingdom reign through the church in this age is through *spiritual ministry* in the church. This speaks of the faithful witness of the gospel among those who are not presently a part of the family and the faithful discipleship of those who are a part of the church into greater maturity (obedience) to his word.
5. If kingdom ministry was always about Temple building, the primary way this happens in this age (until the return of Jesus) is through the building of the church into the fullness of maturity in Christ.

¹²to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³until we all attain to the unity of faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph 4.12-13)

C. Jesus is presently *interceding for his Bride*

1. The author of Hebrews outlines a specific and particular aspect of Christ's present ministry as he reigns at the right hand of the Father.
2. He declares that Jesus *lives to make intercession* on behalf of his people — even now in the courts of heaven.

²⁵Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb 7.25)

3. This truth fills us with confidence that we can approach God's throne with confidence and boldness because of the work of Jesus. We also know that Jesus Christ, our faithful and perfect high priest, is praying for us that God's purposes would be completely fulfilled.

⁶And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus (Phil 1.6)