

“Why We Believe in an Optimistic Future, Part 2”  
(1 Corinthians 15:25)

I. Introduction.

A. Orientation.

1. Last week,
  - a. We were looking at reasons
  - b. We have to be optimistic about the future.
2. We saw first that Jesus is reigning now.
  - a. Not in a limited sense,
    - (i) But with full power and authority.
    - (ii) We don't have to wait for His return
    - (iii) For Him to take up His power and rule –
    - (iv) He's been ruling as the Mediator
    - (v) Since the time He ascended.
  - b. We saw that because He is reigning now
    - (i) When you die –
    - (ii) If you have trusted Him –
    - (iii) You will reign with Him as well in heaven,
    - (iv) For the remainder of the millennium.
  - c. That's certainly something to look forward to.
3. We saw second, that His reign will end
  - a. When all His enemies have been subdued.
    - (i) When that has happened,
    - (ii) He will come again to vanquish the last enemy: death.
  - b. Not only does this mean
    - (i) That the Second Coming signals
    - (ii) The end of His reign, rather than the beginning,
    - (iii) It also gives us something else to look forward to:
      - (a) The unnatural separation of our souls from our bodies
      - (b) That takes place at death
      - (c) Will be reversed,
      - (d) Our bodies will be raised, glorified,
      - (e) And reunited with our souls.
  - (v) And then we will enter
    - (a) Into the new heavens and earth
    - (b) Without and weakness, sickness or infirmities of any kind,
    - (c) To spend eternity with our Lord.

(vi) That's certainly something to look forward to.

#### B. Preview.

1. This brings us to this evening's topic:
  - a. Is there anything we have to look forward to in this world
  - b. As the result of this ongoing subjection
  - c. Of our Lord's enemies?
2. I believe there are at least two things:
  - a. Something we can all agree on,
  - b. And something we may differ on.
    - (i) First, the fact that He is reigning now can give us the confidence that everything will work out as God has planned.
    - (ii) Second, that the Father will systematically subdue His enemies under His feet should give us the confidence that things will improve dramatically in this world before He returns.

#### II. Sermon.

- A. First, the fact that He is reigning now can give us the confidence that everything will work out as God has planned. "He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).
  1. That's what the Father promised Jesus many years before He came into the world.
    - a. Remember Jesus' question in the Temple,
      - (i) If the Christ is the son of David,
      - (ii) Then why did David say in the Holy Spirit,
      - (iii) "The Lord said to My Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, until I put your enemies beneath your feet'" (Mark 12:35-36)?
        - (a) He said this because this was one of the things
        - (b) The Father promised to give Jesus
        - (c) For His work of redemption.
    - b. Paul tells us as much in Philippians 2:9-11,
      - (i) That because Jesus was willing to humble Himself
      - (ii) And come into this world as a man
      - (iii) And undergo the cursed death on the cross,
      - (iv) "For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."
      - (v) "He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25).
    - c. Jesus is reigning now,

- (i) And will continue to reign
  - (ii) Until all His – and our – enemies are subdued under His feet.
- 2. Now that is a reason to be optimistic about the near future.
  - a. First, if He's reigning with absolute authority
    - (i) Then we can know for certain
      - (a) That He will rule and overrule
      - (b) Everything that happens in this world
      - (c) For the good of *His church in general*
      - (d) And *your good in particular* (Rom. 8:28).
      - (e) No one can stand in His way.
    - (ii) He's ruling over the nations now,
      - (a) So we know that whatever is happening
      - (b) Is happening because it's His will –
      - (c) Remember not His will of command –
      - (d) That's something we have yet to see –
      - (e) But His will of decree.
    - (iii) That's why the world hasn't destroyed itself – the Lord won't allow it until He's finished using it for the good of His church.
      - (a) Those of us alive during the Cold War
        - (1) Were afraid that the US and Russia
        - (2) Were going to start a nuclear war
        - (3) That would destroy the world.
      - (b) If we had trusted the Lord more
        - (1) We wouldn't have had to be afraid!
        - (2) He has a plan for this world –
        - (3) He must gather His church out of it,
        - (4) And His enemies must be subdued.
        - (5) Until that is complete,
        - (6) He won't let man destroy it.
      - (c) Remember that whenever you hear
        - (1) About North Korea or the Middle East in the news.
        - (2) They won't be able to destroy the world
        - (3) Any more than Russia.
        - (4) The Lord is sovereign over all things.
    - (iv) We can also have confidence no matter what may happen to us personally.
      - (a) We don't know the mind of the Lord,
      - (b) And may not be able to see
      - (c) How He will work all that He does in our lives together for good –
      - (d) Sometimes things might look pretty grim –

- (e) But we can know that He will
  - (f) Because He said He will (Rom. 8:28),
  - (g) And nothing can stand in His way.
- b. Secondly, this also helps with the distant future:
- (i) As a believer, you never have a reason to despair:
    - (a) Jesus has already won the war He's called you to fight –
    - (b) For *this world in general*,
    - (c) And for *your soul in particular*.
  - (ii) Everything that happens between now and the end
    - (a) Is only a mop up operation.
    - (b) The kingdom of heaven will advance.
    - (c) The kingdom of the evil one will retreat.
    - (d) These old heavens and earth will be destroyed,
    - (e) The new heavens and earth will come
    - (f) Where there is nothing
    - (g) But righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.
  - (iii) *If you're trusting in Jesus to save you*,
    - (a) *You will be there* as well.
    - (b) There's nothing in heaven or earth that can stop Him
    - (c) From bringing you there.
  - (iv) I realize the problem with assurance
    - (a) Is usually on our end –
      - (1) Sometimes we struggle with whether or not
      - (2) We're genuine believers:
      - (3) If you love the Lord
      - (4) And are walking in His ways,
      - (5) You are!
    - (b) But if you've ever struggled
      - (1) With whether or not God intends
      - (2) To bring the new heavens and earth,
      - (3) Or whether He has the power to do so,
      - (4) Or whether He intends to uphold it forever,
      - (5) Don't!
    - (c) He will do all He has planned.
      - (1) God isn't a man that He should waver,
      - (2) Or change His mind,
      - (3) Or run out of power.
      - (4) What He intends to do, He will do.
      - (5) If you're trusting Him, you will see it.

- B. Second, that the Father will systematically subdue His enemies under His feet should give us the confidence that things will improve dramatically in this world before He returns.
1. As I told you before,
    - a. There may be room for even greater optimism
    - b. Before the Lord returns:
      - (i) It's very likely that the Lord is intending
      - (ii) To allow some of the blessings of Christ's reign
      - (iii) To break into history before the consummation –
      - (iv) Before the return of Christ.
  2. Again, let me draw your attention
    - a. To the fact that Paul says
      - (i) That Jesus will reign until all His enemies
      - (ii) Are subdued under His feet.
    - b. When will this happen?
      - (i) It will happen sometime *before* He returns
      - (ii) To vanquish the last enemy – death.
        - (a) Death, as we've seen, will be defeated
        - (b) When He returns to raise the dead.
        - (c) That will be at His Second Coming.
        - (d) All His other enemies
        - (e) Will be systematically subdued *before then*.
    - c. This subjection of His enemies is gradual:
      - (i) It began at His ascension and session at the right hand of God.
        - (a) It included the subjection of the true Jews through the Gospel,
        - (b) The Gentiles as well.
        - (c) It included His judgment against Israel in 70 AD,
        - (d) And everything that has happened
        - (e) In the history of the human race,
        - (f) From that time to the present.
      - (ii) It ebbs and flows –
        - (a) As we know from history-
        - (b) But it is moving inexorably towards its conclusion.
    - d. As this subjection continues, the kingdom grows,
      - (i) And it will continue to grow until it fills the world.
      - (ii) Daniel writes regarding King Nebuchadnezzar's dream, "But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (2:35).
        - (a) The stone is the kingdom of God.
        - (b) And one day, it will fill the whole earth.

- (iii) Which means it will also influence the whole world:
  - (a) Jesus said the kingdom is like leaven
  - (b) Which a woman took and hid in three measures of flour
  - (c) Until it was all leavened (v. 33).
  - (d) The influence of the kingdom begins small
  - (e) But it will eventually permeate the whole earth.
- (iv) It will be a blessing to all the nations:
  - (a) Jesus said the kingdom is like a mustard seed that grows into a tree
  - (b) So that the birds of the air nest in its branches (Matt. 13:31-32).
    - (1) The kingdom began small
    - (2) But it will become so great
    - (3) That the kings of the earth will seek refuge in its shadow.
  - (c) David writes, “All nations whom You have made shall come and worship before You, O Lord, and they shall glorify Your name” (Psalm, 86:9).
  - (d) Isaiah sums it up by writing, “Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And He will delight in the fear of the LORD, and He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; and He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked. Also righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist. And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his hand on the viper’s den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious” (Isa. 11:1-10).
- e. Messiah’s kingdom – the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ –
  - (i) Will become so powerful
  - (ii) That it will bring peace and blessing to the whole world.
- f. It seems fitting that the world that rejected Jesus
  - (i) Should be subjected to Him –
    - (a) That the world should see Him vindicated

- (b) As they see the blessings His reign and subjection
    - (c) To His will brings.
  - (ii) Jesus told His disciples,
    - (a) Go and make disciples of all the nations (Matt. 28:19) –
    - (b) Apparently, that command will be fulfilled.
  - (iii) Jesus told His disciples to pray,
    - (a) That His kingdom would come
      - (1) That His will would be done
      - (2) On earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10) –
    - (b) Apparently, that petition
      - (1) Will be fulfilled.
      - (2) This should give us a great deal of optimism regarding the future.
      - (3) Edwards' quote.
3. Finally, how can we hope to see more of these blessings in the present?
- a. By advancing His kingdom!
    - (i) Whether you believe the next event
      - (a) On the horizon is the Second Coming,
      - (b) Or the coming of His kingdom in this world with power,
    - (ii) The only way you can see either come more quickly
      - (a) Is by giving yourself to advancing God's kingdom
      - (b) Through prayer, worship, and sharing your faith with others.
      - (c) This is how His enemies are subdued.
    - (iii) The more you do these things,
      - (a) The more the kingdom moves forward
      - (b) And the more influence it has on the world.
      - (c) If you want to see more of the Lord's blessings
      - (d) This is what you must seek.
  - b. But don't forget,
    - (i) If you are to do this,
      - (a) If you are even to be part of this kingdom
      - (b) And share in these blessings,
    - (ii) You must first be a believer.
      - (a) Make sure you're trusting in the Lord,
      - (b) Turning from your sins,
      - (c) And serving the Lord with your whole life.
      - (d) With all your God-given gifts, resources and opportunities.
  - c. Next time, we'll look at

- (i) What some believe to be standing in the way
- (ii) Of this glorious future. Amen.

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