

April 24th, 2022

# The Plundering of Satan's House

1 Corinthians 15:25

## Spiritual schizophrenia?

I want to begin this morning by just pointing out some of the inconsistencies that we as evangelicals often have in our thinking. On the one hand, we sing songs like “This Is My Father’s World”

This is my Father's world: Why should my heart be sad?

The Lord is King: let the heavens ring! God reigns; let earth be glad!

We proclaim that Jesus was raised from the dead, and seated on the right hand of God where He is reigning and putting all enemies under His feet (**1 Corinthians 15:25**). And then on the other hand, it is declared by many of us that this world belongs to Satan, that we don’t win down here, we lose, that Satan is *the god of this world*. Which one is it? Is Jesus the King of kings *in this age*, or is Satan?

## Who is winning?

Every single Christian believes that King Jesus will win at the close of this age—that He will cast the devil into the lake of fire and sulfur (**Revelation 20:10**). The question this morning is this: will Jesus defeat the devil *in history*? Who will triumph in this age: Satan or Jesus Christ? Whose house is being plundered? Is Satan plundering Christ’s House or is Christ plundering Satan’s? Is it really Christ’s church that is on the defensive in this age, ever retreating, ever shrinking back? Or is it Satan on the retreat? Beloved is it possible that we have interpreted history wrongly? What does Scripture say Jesus came into the world to do? He came to slay the serpent.<sup>1</sup> **1 John 3:8** “The reason the Son

---

<sup>1</sup> Genesis 3:15

of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.”<sup>2</sup> Beloved there was a time, when Satan had dominion over man. Before Christ came the nations were firmly under Satan’s grip. But when King Jesus came into the world, everything changed. “The true light, which enlightens everyone, [came] into the world... the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not over come it” (**John 1:7, 5**). Jesus came into the world plunder Satan’s house, to take back what the first Adam had lost, to re-establish dominion over earth for the glory of God.

### *The Big Idea...*

When Christ entered history, He bound Satan and began to plunder his house, and that plundering will continue until he is completely under Christ’s feet

☆ Our Doctrine

☆ Our Duty

☆ Our Delight

## I. Our Doctrine

### **Is this a non-sequitur?**

How does all this connect to our passage? Remember that Paul began **ch.15** by proving the necessity and reality of the resurrection of Christ. Then in **v.24**, he all-the-sudden began to speak about Jesus’ Kingdom—the kingdom that He would deliver to God the Father at the end of this age. So it begs the question: what does Jesus’ Resurrection have to do with Jesus’ Kingdom? What’s the connection between the two? Well when Jesus rose and ascended into Heaven, He fulfilled the promise God made to David (**2 Samuel 7:13**) to set one of his descendants on his throne who would build a house for God’s name.

---

<sup>2</sup> cf. Hebrews 2:14

Yes, as the Son of God,—as the Second Person of the Trinity—He has always been King. **Psalm 145:13** “Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and your dominion endures throughout all generations.” But as the Mediator—as the God-man—He *became King* when He entered into this world. **Daniel 2:44** prophesies that when Christ came into the world, “*the God of heaven will set up [his] kingdom.*” Reformed theologians call this His Messianic Kingdom<sup>3</sup> and it spans from His 1st coming to His 2nd coming. When He comes again, then He will give this Kingdom to His Father (v.24), thus combining His reign as Mediator with His reign as supreme Lord over all.<sup>4</sup>

### **He has put all His enemies under His feet**

Here’s the question: What is Christ doing *now*? During His reign as Messianic King, what is He accomplishing? Look at the end of v.24. He is “... destroying every rule and every authority and power. [v.25] For he must reign *until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*” What does this mean to have Christ’s

---

<sup>3</sup> Cf. John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. VIII*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks, 2009), pg. 61-62; and *Vol. XX*, pg. 31-33 (esp. fn. 2); Herman Witsius, *Sacred Dissertations on the Lord’s Prayer*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Reformation Heritage Books, 2010), pg. 210-249; Thomas Goodwin, *The Works of Thomas Goodwin Vol. 12*, (Lafayette, IN.: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 2000), pg. 84-85; John Owen, “*The Advantage of the Kingdom of Christ in the Shaking of the Kingdoms of the World*” in *The Works of John Owen, Vol. 8*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), pg. 311; Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 330; A.A. Hodge, *Outlines of Theology*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), pg. 428-429; A.A. Hodge, “*The Kingly Office of Christ*” in *Evangelical Theology*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1990), pg. 223-248; B.B. Warfield, *The Works Of Benjamin B. Warfield, Vol. 2: Biblical Doctrines*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks, 1932), pg. 625; J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.: P & R Publishing, 1971), pg. 17. Christ’s 3-fold offices of Prophet, Priest, and King demand this same type of distinction. cf. Larger Catechism Q. 42-45 and Shorter Catechism Q.23-26

<sup>4</sup> Hodge says here “When that is done...then He will not longer reign over the universe as Mediator, but only as God; while his headship over his people is to continue for ever.” Charles Hodge, *A Commentary on 1 & 2 Corinthians*, (Carlisle, PA.: The Banner of Truth Trust, Reprint 2018), pg. 330. Calvin says here: “We acknowledge, it is true, God as the ruler, but it is in the face of the man Christ. But Christ will then restore the kingdom which he has received, that we may cleave wholly to God. Nor will he in this way resign the kingdom, but will transfer it in a manner from his humanity to his glorious divinity, because a way of approach will then be opened up, which our infirmity now keeps us back.” John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Vol. XX*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: BakerBooks 2009), pg. 32 “Similarly, Thiselton recognizes the importance of seeing that “since God and Christ as Lord are “One,’ this emphasis is not upon a ‘discontinuation’ of Christ’s lordship as such, but upon its culmination within the terms of its purpose for this world and Christ’s kingdom here.” Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner, *The Pillar New Testament Commentary: The First Letter to the Corinthians*, (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), pg. 766

enemies put under his feet? We shouldn't *merely* speculate. We should ask, are there other places in the Bible that uses this *same* imagery? Yes. Please turn with me to **Joshua 10**.<sup>5</sup> Recall that this was the battle that Joshua and the Israelites had against the five Amorite kings who made war against Gibeon—Israel's vassal state. Israel had sworn by covenant to protect them, so when these kings and their armies attacked, Israel was obligated to defend them. This was the battle where Joshua prayed for the sun to stand still *so that* Israel could take vengeance on her enemies. These five kings were forced to flee and they hid in a cave. The Israelites found them and brought them to Joshua. Look at **v.24** we read "And when they brought those kings out to Joshua, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the chiefs of the men of war who had gone with him, "*Come near; put your feet on the necks of these kings.*" Then they came near and put their feet on their necks." Stop. These kings who had, *only one day earlier*, ruled their own people were now disarmed, humiliated, and unable to make war anymore. They were subdued and brought low. Their power was stripped from them. One more place. Please turn with me to **1 Kings 5:3-4**. Here King Solomon is explaining to King Hiram *why* he enjoyed peace in his day. "You know that David my father could not build a house for the name of the Lord his God because of the warfare with which his enemies surrounded him, until the Lord put them under the soles of his feet. <sup>4</sup>But now the Lord my God has given me rest on every side. There is neither adversary nor misfortune." Why did Solomon have rest on every side, with no adversary or misfortune. Because God put the enemies of Israel under the feet of King David, meaning, David had defeated them. So combining these two passages, we see when your enemies are put under your feet, they are stripped of their power, disarmed, humiliated, and the result is peace and rest.

### **Christ won't return until...**

With that in mind, let's turn back to **1 Corinthians 15:25**. Look again at what Paul says "For he must reign *until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*"

---

<sup>5</sup> Also see 2 Samuel 22:38-40; Psalm 47:3; 58:10; Daniel 7:7, 19; Romans 16:20

Just as Joshua and David put their enemies under their feet stripping them of their power, disarming them, humiliating them, bring peace and rest to their people—so Christ is going to do the same. And He is going to do this before He returns. It says “...he must reign [in other words, He must stay in Heaven] until” He has defeated them. Listen to what John Calvin says here:

“...the time is not yet come when Christ *will deliver up the kingdom to the Father*...because Christ has not yet subdued all his enemies. Now that must be brought about, because the Father has placed him at his right hand with this understanding, that he is not to resign the authority that he has received, until they have been subdued under his power....the day of *delivering up the kingdom* [the 2nd coming] had not yet arrived, because Christ has still to do with his enemies.”<sup>6</sup>

Jesus will not return *until* He has conquered earth—until He puts all His and our enemies under His feet.

### **Our doctrine: Christ’s plundering of Satan’s House**

Can we see this *in history*? Can we see King Jesus actually bringing His enemies under His feet *in history*? Yes. Our focus this morning is to see *how* Jesus has been putting Satan under His feet since His 1st coming. Here’s **our doctrine**: *When Christ entered history, He bound Satan and began to plunder his house, and that plundering will continue until he is completely under Christ’s feet.* Dear congregation, you must comprehend what the world was like before Christ. What happened in the garden when Adam fell into sin? Satan *defeated man* by enticing him to sin. When that happened, Satan took dominion away from

---

<sup>6</sup> Calvin, pg. 28. Furthermore Calvin says this “Let believer, therefore, be of good courage, and not give up hope, until everything that must precede the resurrection be accomplished” (pg. 29). On v.27a, Calvin says “Farther, we know, that Adam lost the right that had been conferred upon him, so that we can no longer call anything our own. For the *earth was cursed* (Gen. 3:17,) and everything that it contains; and it is through Christ alone that we recover what has been taken from us” (pg. 30).

Adam.<sup>7</sup> This is why Satan claimed that he had authority over all the kingdoms on earth when he tempted Christ in **Luke 4:6**. And God prophesied that this dominion wouldn't be restored to man until the Seed of the Woman came and crushed the seed of the serpent (**Genesis 3:15**). So throughout the OT we see Satan exercising a vast power over mankind. At the flood<sup>8</sup>, Satan's dominion had so corrupted the earth that only Noah and his family survived God's judgment on the earth. (**Genesis 6:5-7**). Satan's poisonous dominion was felt humanity's rebellion at the Tower of Babel (**Genesis 11**) and the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah (**Genesis 19**). We are told in **2 Kings 17:29** that every nation on earth served demon gods which they fashioned into idols.<sup>9</sup> The only nation on earth that had escaped Satan's dominion was Israel. When God called Abraham out of Babylon (**Genesis 12**), He called him out from under the dominion of Satan.<sup>10</sup> In the entire OT, Israel *alone* was rescued from Satan's dominion (**Deuteronomy 7:6**) Yet even they were in constant apostasy. The book of Judges proves this out. Eventually God gave them what they wanted and He appointed the Assyria and the Babylon to remove Israel from her land because of her defection to the devil. The OT is a history of Satan's dominion on the earth since the fall.<sup>11</sup> That's the context in which the NT begins: humanity

---

<sup>7</sup> God has always been sovereign over the universe. Satan's dominion over man in no way negates God's sovereignty. When Satan acted in the OT, he needed God's permission (**Job 1:12**). The idea of dualism—that God and devil are in a cosmic battle for control of the universe—is false. There is no question who is in control: "Our God is in the heavens; he does all that he pleases" (**Psalms 115:3**). However we must not forget that God can still be sovereign at the same time that He has permitted Satan to have dominion over man because of the fall.

<sup>8</sup> 1,600 years after the fall - source: <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-timeline/timeline-for-the-flood/>

<sup>9</sup> Paul tells us the false gods and their idols are actually demons (1 Corinthians 10:20). Furthermore, there were demon princes who were stationed over nations—one over Persia in **Daniel 10:13** and Tyre in **Ezekiel 28:11-16**.

<sup>10</sup> When God delivered Israel out of Egypt, He delivered them from Egypt and their demon gods. **2 Samuel 7:23** "And who is like your people Israel, the one nation on earth whom God went to redeem to be his people, making himself a name and doing for them great and awesome things by driving out before your people, whom you redeemed for yourself from Egypt, a nation and its gods?" see <https://biblecharts.org/oldtestament/thetenplagues.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> This makes sense of Satan's tempting of Jesus. In **Luke 4:5-6** we read that "...the devil took him up and showed him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time,<sup>6</sup> and said to him, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, *for it has been delivered to me*, and I give it to whom I will." The kingdoms of men were imprisoned under Satan's control.

imprisoned under the dominion of Satan. Then in the fullness of time, Christ came into the world, and began to plunder Satan's house.

### Matthew 12:22-29

“Then a demon-oppressed man who was blind and mute was brought to him, and he healed him, so that the man spoke and saw.<sup>23</sup> And all the people were amazed, and said, “Can this be the Son of David?”<sup>12</sup> <sup>24</sup> But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, “It is only by Beelzebul<sup>13</sup>, the prince of demons, that this man casts out demons.” <sup>25</sup> Knowing their thoughts, he said to them, “Every kingdom divided against itself is laid waste, and no city or house divided against itself will stand. <sup>26</sup> And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? <sup>27</sup> And if I cast out demons by Beelzebul, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they will be your judges. <sup>28</sup> But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. [Stop]

Here's the question: According to Jesus, *why* can He cast out demons? Because (v.28) the Kingdom of God has finally come in His own Person. Satan's kingdom now is being overthrown. As one author says “Exorcisms performed by Christ were an outward manifestation of the great confrontation taking place between the kingdom of Satan and the kingdom of God.”<sup>14</sup> Then Jesus puts this exorcism the form of a metaphor in v.29.

---

<sup>12</sup> Why did they conclude that if Jesus casts out demons, He might be the Son of David? Because they knew that David's Greater Son, the Messiah, the King, would come to topple Satan's kingdom.

<sup>13</sup> “By a play on words, the Jews of Christ's day had changed “Beelzebub” (a title for Satan taken from the Philistine god by that name, “lord of the flies;” cf. 2 Kings 1:2ff.) into “beelzebul,” that is, “baal zebel” or “lord of dung.” In utter contempt for the work of Satan, people came to call him the “dung-god.” Greg L. Bahnsen, *Victory In Jesus: The Bright Hope of Postmillennialism*, (Nacogdoches, TX.: Covenant Media Press, 1999), pg. 174

<sup>14</sup> “The Gospels are nothing less than an account of the cosmic struggle between God's messianic Son and Satan.” *Ibid*, pg. 180

“Or how can someone enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? Then indeed he may plunder his house.”

Clearly in this metaphor *the strong man* is Satan, *the strong man's house* is the world, and *the strong man's goods that are being plundered* are men that were captive to his will. In this one sweeping statement, Jesus is saying “Now that I have come into the world, I have bound Satan, and I am plundering His house, setting the captives free.” In other words, the binding of Satan is not a future event, it has already happened.<sup>15</sup>

### **Luke 10:17-19**

At the beginning of this chapter, Jesus sent of 72 disciples to proclaim “the kingdom of God” (v.9). They were not prepared for what was going to happen next. Look at v.17

“The seventy-two returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!”

Stop. Notice that the disciples were shocked with joy at what had happened. As they preached in Christ's name, the demons were forced to obey them. They healed those oppressed by the devil. They couldn't believe it! Something new was happening in the world. So Jesus interprets the events for them. Picking up in v.18

And he said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. <sup>19</sup> Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.””

Satan falling like lightning from heaven wasn't an actual physical occurrence. And neither did the disciples literally stomp on actual snakes. This fantastic

---

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, pg. 189

language is meant to indicate that the promise of **Genesis 3:15** is starting to be fulfilled. The serpent is falling from his position of power. J. Marcellus Kik puts it like this:

“Through the preaching of the gospel Satan was cast from his high heaven to the dust of the earth. Through the preaching of the gospel the disciples tread upon the serpent. Satan was to receive a crushing blow not through a cataclysmic act at the second coming *but by the preaching of the gospel.*”<sup>16</sup>

When Christ came into the world, and the gospel began to be preached in His name, Satan lost his dominion over the world. Not at the second coming. At the first coming.

### **John 12:31-33**<sup>17</sup>

Jesus said these next words during passion week, just a few days before His crucifixion:

“Now is the judgment of this world; *now will the ruler of this world* [Satan] *be cast out.* <sup>32</sup> And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” <sup>33</sup> He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die.

Jesus is clearly speaking of His crucifixion here. At His cross three things happened **1)** the world was judged (**v.31**); **2)** Satan was cast out (**v.31**); and **3)** He began to draw all people to Himself. Let’s take those one at a time. **First**, what does it mean that the world will be *judged*? The word for judgment can mean either *reformation*—as in, the world will be reformed. Or judgment means *condemnation*—as in, the world will be condemned. Calvin believed Jesus meant the world would be reformed or restored. He says here:

---

<sup>16</sup> J. Marcellus Kik, *An Eschatology of Victory*, (Phillipsburg, NJ.,: P & R Publishing, 1971), pg. 19. Note: Kik’s whole section entitled “It Shall Bruise Thy Head” beginning on pg. 17 and ending on pg. 20 is just fantastic.

<sup>17</sup> also cf. John 16:11

“...the Hebrew word...translated as judgment means a well-ordered state. Now we know, that out of Christ there is nothing but confusion in *the world*; and although Christ had already begun to erect the kingdom of God, it was His death that was the true beginning of...the complete restoration of the world.”<sup>18</sup>

In short, at the crucifixion, Jesus began to restore the world that was lost in the fall. How? Satan was cast out. That’s the **second** formal effect of the cross: Satan was cast out. Just as Adam was cast out of the garden, when he surrendered his dominion to Satan due to sin, Jesus Christ the second Adam through His cross cast Satan out of the world stripping him of his dominion. **Thirdly**, post-cross Jesus is now drawing all men to Himself. **v.32** “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” In contrast with the Old World before the cross, instead of all men being drawn to Satan, now they will all be drawn to Christ.<sup>19</sup> As B.B. Warfield says, this is not a each-and-every person universalism, but an eschatological universalism where Jesus turns the world as a system back to God in this last age.

### **Revelation 20:1-3**<sup>20</sup>

One thing you have to understand about Revelation, is that it is a picture book. It is like Nebuchadnezzar’s dreams that picture world events through fantastical imagery.

---

<sup>18</sup> Source: <https://ccel.org/ccel/calvin/calcom35/calcom35.ii.v.html> Accessed April 23, 2022

<sup>19</sup> “Christ’s death will exercise a massive influence in history by gradually, relentlessly, and graciously drawing all men to him. By this redemptive means, he will move the world as a system back to God. Christ will not accomplish his universal sway over men “with sword’s loud clashing” by political imposition, but by spiritual transformation. The final result, however, is not an each-and-ever universalism. Rather, it is a massive, systemic conversion of the vast majority of men, who then progressively transform the world.” Gentry, pg. 254. Also see B.B. Warfield’s distinction between and eschatological universalism vs. an each-and-every universalism. *Ibid*, pg. 277

<sup>20</sup> Also see Revelation 12:10-11 (See Bahnsen, pg. 182ff)

“Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. <sup>2</sup> And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, <sup>3</sup> and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.”

The first question here is *when* does this take place? Not in the future, but in the past, when Christ first came into the world. How do we know? Because all these other passages we have been reading have been testifying to the exact same event. This Angel coming down from heaven having the key to hell in His hand is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. **Revelation 1:18**<sup>21</sup> tells us that Christ has the spiritual keys of hell. At His first coming, as we have seen, Christ bound Satan. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 **John 3:8**). Here we see that doesn’t mean that Satan can’t do anything. It’s clear that in the world today, there is still satanic activity. But his activity has fundamentally changed. **v.3** tells us *explicitly* the manner in which Satan is bound. He’s bound “so that he might not deceive the nations any longer.” Before Christ came, every nation was under Satan’s dominion and darkness. Israel alone knew Yahweh and tasted salvation in the Messiah. But now, as one author says, “because Christ now rules the nations (**Psalm 2:8-9**), Satan is unable to decide the nations. A missionary door of utterance has been opened to the nations for faith which no man can shut. The Great Commission shall be accomplished, and all nations shall be made disciple of Christ, since all power in heaven and earth has been granted to Him and He is ever present with this power in His Church.”<sup>22</sup> For how long? 1,000 years. This is not a literal 1,000 years. It is symbolic just like how **Psalm 50:10** says that God owns the cattle on 1,000 hills. It doesn’t mean that on hill 1,001 God stops owning the

---

<sup>21</sup> “I died, and behold I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of Death and Hades.”

<sup>22</sup> Bahnsen, pg. 190

cattle. 1,000 years here means “a vast, undefined period of time.”<sup>23</sup> How long? For however long it takes for King Jesus to put all enemies under His feet. For He must reign until that is accomplished.

### **Matthew 16:18**

“And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.”

The rock that Jesus builds His Church on is the gospel—the confession that Jesus is Messiah sent to save the world. But have we been reading this verse wrong?<sup>24</sup> If we assume that Satan is advancing and the church is the one retreating being the castle walls, we are turning this verse on its head. That is 100% opposite of what it says. The Church is not behind the gates. Satan and his hordes are in a huddle hiding behind those gates. The kingdom of Christ is the army that is advancing. It is on the offensive. The dying kingdom of Satan is the pathetic band hiding behind the gates. It is on the defensive. The kingdom of Christ is banging down gates of hell. And Jesus says those gates will not prevail. Those gates will fall in this age, and Christ will reign victorious.<sup>25</sup>

### **Summa Theologica**

What have we seen from all these passages? It is not the Christ’s Kingdom that is growing weaker and weaker in this age. It is growing stronger

---

<sup>23</sup> Chilton, pg. 189

<sup>24</sup> When Joshua went into the promised land, imagine God telling him “the gates of Jericho will not prevail against Israel.” Who would we conclude is behind the gates, on the defensive, fending for their lives? Not Israel. They are on the attack. Jericho is behind the gates, Jericho is losing the war.

<sup>25</sup> J. Marcellus Kik says here: “To say that the defeat of Satan will only come through a cataclysmic act at the second coming of Christ is ridiculous in the light of these passages. To think that the church must grow weaker and weaker and the kingdom of Satan stronger and stronger is to deny that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil; it is to dishonor Christ; it is to disbelieve His Word. We do not glorify God nor His prophetic word by being pessimists and defeatists. With sufficient faith in Christ we could crush Satan under our feet shortly. Or else these passages have no significance to the church of Christ.” Kik, pg. 19-20

and stronger. Christ is still plundering Satan's house. Hell is retreating. Not the Christ's Church. That's **our doctrine**. When Christ entered history, He bound Satan and began to plunder his house, and that plundering will continue until he is completely under Christ's feet

## II. Our Duty

### Spiritual vs. physical

Our only **duty** is to carefully consider some objections to what we've heard. The first objection goes like this: "Christ's kingdom does not include the physical realm, only the spiritual realm. Yes we expect that Christ's Kingdom grows in the spiritual but not in the physical realm." Think carefully about what this objection is saying. Essentially it's saying "the material world is surrendered to Satan, and the spiritual world is reserved to God."<sup>26</sup> Test yourself, is that what you think? Do you think the physical world belongs to Satan, and God only possesses the spiritual realm? If so, don't you realize that is dualism at best and gnosticism at worse? That is not Christian thinking. Paul warned Timothy in **1 Timothy 4:1**, that there are certain doctrines of demons, that teach Christians to withdraw from God's physical world and focus on asceticism and so-called higher 'spiritual' living. The underlying assumption is that the physical world belongs to Satan. He calls this worldly philosophy and empty deceit in **Colossians 2:8**. Beloved, Christ's Kingdom does not *merely* advance in the spiritual realm, but in the physical also. Now I 100% agree that Christ's Kingdom never begins in the physical. There is a sort of secular postmillennialism out there that must absolutely be rejected. This is based on the idea of Darwinian evolution, that the human race will necessarily improve and make progress and the Church's job is to engage in the social gospel to do

---

<sup>26</sup> R.J. Rushdoony, *God's Plan For Victory: The Meaning of Postmillennialism*, (Vallecito, CA.: Chalcedon Foundation, 1997), pg. 11

our part in making this world a better place. That's a heresy. No, Christ Kingdom absolutely begins in the spiritual realm. How?

By giving us the new birth. **Ezekiel 36:26** "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh."

By removing all our guilt and wickedness and corruption. **Titus 2:14** "[He] gave Himself for us to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession."

By imputing to us righteousness that will withstand the Great Day. **Philippians 3:9** "And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith"

Christ absolutely transforms us spiritually *first*. But what happens after that? Do our lives in the physical realm remain the same? Absolutely not.<sup>27</sup> When Jesus Christ transforms a soul, He begins His works of sanctification renewing, reforming and restoring that soul and this transformation necessarily manifests itself in the physical realm. This is the record of the NT. When Peter preached at Pentecost in Acts 2, that hostile Satan-enslaved crowd was transformed into the foundation of the NT Church. Instantaneously this manifested in the physical realm as they devoted to the Apostolic teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking bread, to prayers, and to sharing with those in need (**Acts 2:42-47**). Missionaries were sent all over the ancient world (**Acts 13-28**). And all the resistance you see to the gospel in all those cities like Iconium, Philippi, Thessalonica etc. was born precisely because the effects of the gospel was felt in

---

<sup>27</sup> The moon worshipper Abraham was transformed into the father of the nation of Israel. The cruel persecutor Saul transformed into the Apostle Paul—preacher of righteousness. The prodigal son transformed into loyal, loving dutiful son. The prostitute Rahab transformed into a woman of great faith risking her life in order to save the Israelite spies.

the physical realm. As souls are transferred from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's beloved Son, satanic social orders and societal power structures are threatened. The gospel *threatens* Caesar worship, idol worship, ungodly magistrates, cronyism, slavery, prostitution, temple worship. These things are the foundation of Satan's kingdom. Satan doesn't care if you accept Jesus into your private heart. He cares if this gospel actually transforms you. He cares if you believe and act as if Jesus Christ is the true King over every sphere of life. Satan's house is plundered when Christians simply act as Christians ought to—bringing the gospel into every sphere of life. When the gospel is applied to marriages, child-rearing, economics, vocation, education, politics, the world is turned upside down. So no, it is not true that Christ's kingdom only applies to the spiritual realm and not the physical. Christ is King over the spiritual and the physical and His gospel transforms both realms.

### **But what about the evil we see in the world today?**

The last objection we need to answer is this: "But we see so much evil in the world today, clearly this is evidence that Satan is not bound. Clearly this world belongs to Satan." How do we answer that? First, that is called newspaper exegesis. We are not to interpret the Bible in light of what world looks like today. We have to interpret the world in light of the Bible. And we have already clearly seen that Jesus has declared that Satan is bound, and that the gates of hell will not prevail against the church. But secondly, I can certainly admit that there is much evil in the world today. It is a sad and tragic thing. But that there is evil in the world today, doesn't mean that Christ's Kingdom is not advancing. Imagine it's 1944, near the end of WW2. Just because the Allied forces hadn't conquered Berlin doesn't mean they weren't winning the war. Pick the most despotic dictator today. Think of the little man in North Korea. Oh the atrocities he commits upon his own people. Does the existence of North Korea mean that Christ is not plundering Satan's house today? Not at all. It just means that He hasn't plundered that room yet. We need to rightly judge history. We don't judge history by how it's been going the last 20 years. We

need to look at the last 2,000. Has Christ been conquering over the last 2,000 years? Is there more light in the world than there was in the first century? Absolutely. King Jesus is reigning from Heaven and He is gradually putting all enemies under His feet as He said He would.

### III. Our Delight

#### **The match before the match**

Back when I wrestled in high school and college, there were always two matches you had to wrestle—the match *itself* and the match before the match. The match before the match was the mental match. Wrestlers would put their mean face on, slap their arms, legs and face, and strut around. Kind of like a blow fish, we puffed ourselves up to intimidate our opponent. If you could get your opponent to be afraid of you 9 times out of 10 you win. If you could intimidate them, the match was won.

#### **Intimidating evangelicals**

Beloved, Satan has largely intimidated evangelicalism for the last century. If we give into the *assumption* that the world belongs to Satan, that he is getting stronger and the Church is getting weaker, we will continue to retreat. Do you remember the spies who brought back the bad report ‘There are giants in the land, we can’t defeat them’ (**Numbers 13:31**). What was the result of that generation for believing that bad report? They had to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. Only Joshua and Caleb—who believed the promise that Yahweh could defeat those giants—were allowed to enter the land. Is it possible that the we in the contemporary church have been wandering in the wilderness because we have been intimidated by the lie that Satan is stronger than Christ? Yes Satan is a roaring lion. Yes He is a fierce dragon that persecutes the Church. He is all those things. But Christ our Savior has overcome. He overcame our

guilt and shame. “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.”<sup>28</sup> He overcame our sin and iniquity. “He was wounded for our transgressions; He was crushed for our iniquities.”<sup>29</sup> He overcame the power of death. “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?”<sup>30</sup> All this He accomplished by shedding His blood on that tree. When He rose again, He threw Satan down and “deposed him, crushed him, and shackled him.”<sup>31</sup> His time is short. He’s losing ground. He’s like a wounded animal that is cornered, his frantic thrashing about is because he’s dying. Luther knew this, that’s why he penned those glorious words:

And tho' this world with devils filled should threaten to undo us  
 We will not fear for God hath willed His truth to triumph through us  
 The prince of darkness grim. We tremble not for him  
 His rage we can endure, for lo his doom is sure  
 One little word shall fell him

What’s that little word? Cross. Through His cross, He cast out the rule of this world.

---

<sup>28</sup> Isaiah 53:4

<sup>29</sup> Isaiah 53:5

<sup>30</sup> I Corinthians 15:55

<sup>31</sup> Bahnsen, pg. 192