

The Coming Judgeship of the Saints(2)

By the late

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*They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their
testimony.*

Revelation 12:11

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The passage that forms the basis of the remarks I wish to make will be found in the second verse of the sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians, which reads thus: “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” It brings before us the subject of the coming judgship of the saints.

Notice, first of all, how the apostle introduces this statement: “Do ye not know?” as though he would say, “Is it possible that you have forgotten this truth? Is it possible that you have overlooked the fact that there is this wonderful destiny in store for you, the rulership of the world?” If St. Paul showed his great surprise at the forgetfulness of the Christians at Corinth, what would he say, I wonder if he came amongst us today?

I. THE IMPORT OF THIS JUDGESHIP

The first question that comes before us is this: What are we to understand by the term “judge”? What is the function implied in the rulership spoken of here? I think it means, first of all, the exercise of judicial power of this world. That is the natural conclusion we should come to and I think it is quite legitimate to say that it does mean that the saints will one day be called upon to exercise judgship over the people of this world. But that is only a part of the meaning. You will remember that at one time in Israel’s history God appointed judges. We read in the twentieth verse of Acts 13: “God gave them judges about the space of four hundred and fifty years.” And the judges that God gave to Israel of old were practically rulers. They were not merely judges who tried cases and adjudicated matters, but they were actual rulers, almost kings. I think that significance also is involved in St. Paul’s statement when he said: “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” The saints are to be not only the judges, but the rulers of the world.

But I think we may go a step further. When we look at the New Testament we discover that this rulership is to be a joint heirship with Jesus Christ in the administration of the affairs of this world. You remember that wonderful passage (Rom. 8:17) where St. Paul, speaking by the Spirit, says: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.” That is what is meant, I think, by the rulership spoken of here. The saints of God are to be rulers with Christ, administrators under Him, of the affairs of this world. Oh, what a prospect that

holds out to us! How that should stimulate us to live for Him now, to do His will, to seek to be wholly on His side!

Possibly you have heard the story of Queen Victoria when she was a child. There came a time when her parents felt that it would be wise for her to know that possibly she might someday be Queen of England. Her governess, the Countess Lehzen, therefore was instructed to make that fact known to her. She took this method of leading her to that knowledge. She inserted in her history a list of the Hanoverian kings at the end of which she wrote the name Victoria. When in her study the Princess came upon the insertion the Countess, her governess, watched the effect closely. The princess read down the page and finally her eyes came upon her own name. She conned it very attentively. Then, looking up at the Countess, she said, "Can it really be that I am to be Queen of England?" The Countess replied, "Yes, in all probability that will be true." After a moment's pause the Princess said, "Then I will be good." She had not been an apt scholar before, she rather rebelled against the tedium of study, but now that she realized how necessary it was that she should learn, how absolutely necessary it was that she should qualify herself to be the Queen of England, then it was no hardship and she began to apply herself with all her power and ability. Would to God we could all get that same inspiration! If I could only impress upon you the fact that God is calling you to be kings and queens! If I could only make you believe it, it would transform many lives. It would make us all far more zealous than we are and would give us a deeper interest in the things of God. It is a fact that God is calling us to this high destiny. Therefore let us seize the opportunity and prepare ourselves, qualify ourselves, by His grace to share in it.

II. THE SCRIPTURAL BASIS FOR THIS JUDGESHIP

When we turn to the Word of God we find that this is not an isolated passage. There are a great many intimations throughout the Scriptures that refer to the coming rulership, the coming kingship, the coming sovereignty of the saints over this earth. Let me call your attention to one or two of them. Take, for instance, Matthew 19:28 where Jesus says:

"Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man shall sit upon the throne of His glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

That was our Lord's word to His twelve apostles. There is a clear intimation that certain of the saints will surely participate in the administration of at least a part of the government of the peoples of the world when Jesus Christ comes.

Look at the book of the Revelation where we get some very clear intimations along this line. Turn, for instance, to the first chapter, verses 5 and 6, and read this wonderful ascription of praise to the Trinity:

“And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood,

“And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen”

Or, look again at the ninth and tenth verses of the fifth chapter of the same book, where we find the writer speaking in terms like this:

“And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;

“And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.”

Now, it might be asked how St. Paul could expect those Corinthian Christians to know that such a possibility awaited them? He says: “Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?” How could they know? What facts had they before them by which they might know? Beloved, this is not a doctrine or a truth found only in the New Testament. It is found also in the Old Testament. Look back for a moment to the seventh chapter of Daniel and see what is said there. Here the rulership of the saints is most distinctly revealed. Let us look first of all at verses 13 and 14 where we read:

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the ancient of days, and they brought him near before him.

“And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.”

Then we read again in verse 18:

“But the saints of the most High shall take the kingdom, and possess the kingdom forever, even forever and ever.”

Again, in verse 22 it says:

“Until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High; and the time came that the saints possessed the kingdom.”

And yet again, in verse 27 we read:

“And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him.”

I do not know whether there is to be a distinction made between the saints of the Most High and the people of the saints of the Most High. Perhaps there is. Some think that the one reference is to the Church, and the other reference to Israel. We know that Israel is to have a part in that Kingdom and the New Testament tells us very distinctly and unmistakably that the saints are to have a very high place and a very great part also in that coming Kingdom. Doubtless it was on account of that passage, as well as many others that we might cite from the Old testament, that St. Paul expected those Corinthian Christians to realize, to know, and to expect such a glorious destiny as is implied in the words that he addressed to them in the sixth chapter of 1 Corinthians.

Beloved, I think there is no doubt we have not entertained this hope more vividly that we have simply for the very same reason that the Corinthian Christians did not entertain it. Doubtless they had not studied the Word of God as they should. But there was more excuse for their lack of study than there is for us today because everybody may study the Bible today; Bibles can be had anywhere for almost nothing and if any of us be ignorant about this wonderful fact it is his own fault.

III. THE PERIOD OF THIS JUDGESHIP

Now I desire to ask, and try to answer, one or two questions with regard to this rulership. First of all, let me ask this question: When will this rulership take place; when will the saints rule, or judge, or govern the world? I will answer at once and say that it will be when Jesus comes. He is to rule this world and we are to rule with Him, to reign with Him. That is the promise. Let us look again at one or two scriptures to see that. Shall we turn for a moment to the last chapter in the Bible, the twenty-second chapter of the Revelation, at verse 12: "And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be." So we learn that the positions in the Kingdom, which be a matter of reward, will not be bestowed until Jesus comes; but when He comes the positions in the Kingdom will be given those to whom they belong. Look please, at the twentieth chapter of the Revelation, verses 4 to 6:

"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years.

"But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection.

"Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years."

There are one or two things to notice here. We read in the first place: "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them." Who were they? If you will look back into the preceding chapter you will find the subject of that statement. Look, for instance, at the eleventh verse of the nineteenth chapter and see what is said there: "And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He doth judge and make war." Then we read in the fourteenth verse how "the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean."

If you will look back to the eighth verse you will find that this linen indicates righteousness, or the righteousness of the saints, and there can be no doubt whatever but that these armies are simply the armies of the saints who have been caught up to meet the Lord in the air, who are with the Lord, and are now coming back with Him to this earth to reign. "I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them," that is, the power of judgment, this judgship of which we are speaking. The power of judgment was given unto them, and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. We have a beautiful type of all this in the Old Testament. It is the type afforded by the history of David. David, you know, was God's king. He is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ in His kingly rule. You remember that David was anointed king no less than three times. He was first of all anointed king at Bethlehem secretly, even in the days of King Saul. Nobody knew of the fact except his own immediate relatives and even they did not realize definitely what it all meant. Later on he was anointed and crowned king over Judah. His own tribe—his own people—were ruled over by him and it was not until sometime later that he was crowned king over the whole kingdom of Israel.

The Lord Jesus Christ is to be King and He has already been anointed as such. He was anointed secretly, as it were, at the Jordan. It was there that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Him, and He was anointed as the Messiah, the Prophet, Priest and King of His people. The world did not recognize Him as King any more than they recognized David as king. But you remember, there came a time a little later on, after David had been anointed king when the people did flock to him, when people came and joined him as he was fleeing from King Saul. Who are recognizing Jesus as King today? The world does not do as He has no visible kingdom as yet; but He is reigning in the hearts of His own true people, and there are those now who are giving their allegiance to Him, who are really acknowledging Jesus as Lord.

There will come a time when He will reign visibly. When will that be? When He comes for His own people and to His own people; when He reigns "before his ancients gloriously." It will be the time when the saints are caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Then He will have all His own with Him and He will reign over them. And from them He will make the coming sharers of the rulership of His Kingdom. Then there will be a time when He will be manifested as King over the whole world. That will be when He comes back with His saints to reign. Then He will establish His Kingdom which "shall be from sea to sea, and from the

river unto the ends of the earth.” All will acknowledge His kingship then. He will exercise universal sway.

IV. THE OCCUPANTS OF THIS JUDGESHIP

Now the question arises, Who will reign? It is a very important question, a very solemn question. It should be a most searching question, and I do hope and pray that God will enable me to impress it upon everyone here, because, beloved, it will mean so much to you individually if you will only think of it and act upon it. Who are to reign with Jesus Christ? All the saints? Oh no, by no means. Let us turn back again to the eighth chapter of Romans, looking now at verse 17: “And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ: if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.” There will be no glorification, and there will be no ascent to the throne, there will be no crowning and there will be no kingdom for us unless we do suffer with Jesus Christ. The easy modern ideas of the present day are not calculated to bring about such a wonderful consummation, and Christians today are content to take things very easily. I cannot help thinking, beloved, that we are in the eleventh hour of the parable that speaks of the laborers of the vineyard. The eleventh hour is not the usual time for a husbandman to go out and engage laborers and if it were not that the work is so tremendously pressing no husbandman would ever do such a thing. I believe the Lord is very near, and I believe that He is calling many whom He never called before into His service. I believe the reason is the urgency of the time. The Lord wants us to be sharers in His work and it will be those who are willing to share in it and those who are willing to suffer in sharing in it upon whom this wonderful privilege will be bestowed.

Look at another text. Turn, if you please, to 2 Timothy, chapter 2, verses 10 to 12: “Therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sakes that they may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.” It is quite possible to be saved without reigning with the coming King; but the salvation that we should desire and seek after diligently is salvation with eternal glory. Let us read on: “It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with him, we shall also live with him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.” Without the suffering there will be not be the reign. No cross, no crown.

Look again at the picture, the type we looked at a moment ago in the case of David. You remember the persons who went after David to the cave of

Adullam. You find the story in the twenty-second chapter of 1 Samuel, verses 1 and 2:

”David therefore departed thence, and escaped to the cave Adullam: and when his brethren and all his father’s house heard it, they went down thither to him.

“And every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto him; and he became a captain over them: and there were with him about four hundred men.”

A wonderfully significant number! Notice the three d’s by which these men are distinguished. They were those who were in debt, in distress and discontented. May we not take them as a type of a similar class today? “Those who are in distress,” who see the grave conditions of the times in which they live, who are so distressed that they desire by God’s grace, to lead souls out of the danger of the day. “Those who are in debt;” oh, what a debt we owe to the Lord Jesus Christ because He has paid our great debt, the debt of sin! “Those who are discontented;” not satisfied with things as they are, longing for a better condition, looking for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, when all will be perfect. It is just such persons as those who went to David in the cave who are coming to the Lord’s side today. It is just such persons who are entering actively into the Lord’s work at the present time; and it will be just such men and women who will be rewarded and given a place in the kingdom when Jesus comes.

Look at the twenty-third chapter of 2 Samuel. Here you have a wonderful statement of what happened when David finally reached the throne, and was publicly acclaimed king. What did he do for those men? He made them the chief rulers in his kingdom. Look at verse 8 for a moment: “These be the names of the mighty men whom David had.” Then he goes on to name them; and you read in verse 13:

“And three of the thirty chief went down, and came to David in the harvest time unto the cave of Adullam: and the troop of the Philistines pitched in the valley of Rephaim.”

And so these very men who went to David in the hour of his distress, in the day of his rejection, who were willing to suffer with him, who were willing to confess him before men were the very ones who, when David came to his throne,

had bestowed upon them the high positions in the administration of his Kingdom. And so will it be, beloved, when Jesus comes.