

People of God, are you a glass half full, or glass half empty kind of person? I recently saw a picture about eschatological views, views about the end times and it used the image of a glass half filled with water. And here is what it said,

Postmillennialism – the glass will continue to fill.

Amillennialism – this is as full as its gonna get.

Historic Premillennialism – When the waiter returns, he will fill the glass.

Dispensationalism – And it shows a flag of the state of Israel coming out of the glass surrounded by the Mosque on the temple mount in Jerusalem, a blood moon, and an Apache helicopter, and a detail chart of the time line of end times events. Hilarious!

I am a postmillennialist, I believe the glass will continue to fill until the end when the glass is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the seas, and then Jesus will give the glass over to his Father. And I have a this optimism because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead.\, and is reigning as King over all things right now.

Now last week we spoke about what some of the disastrous and sad consequences would be if Jesus was not resurrected from the dead. We said that if Christ is not resurrected then our preaching is in vain, our faith is in vain, we are false witness of God, we are still in our sins, all our loved ones who have died have perished forever, and we are the most pitiable men on the planet.

Indeed, if there is no resurrection, the glass isn't half empty, the glass is completely empty and knocked over onto the ground and broken into a thousand pieces never to hold the water of hope ever again.

But this is not the case. The glass, or this earth, is going to continue to be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord. Because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead we have hope. And our hope that flows out from

Christ's resurrection is not just a hope about what will happen at the end of history, as important as that is. But because Jesus Christ is risen from the dead, and is seated at the right hand of God, all things are being made new right now. Christ's kingdom is always increasing and growing throughout history. And that will have real tangible effects on this world.

Isaiah 9 says *Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end.* Jesus, whom this passage is about, also tells us in similar fashion that the kingdom of Heaven is like leaven which was hid in three measures of flour till all was leavened. According to the prophet Daniel the kingdom of God is the altar rock that was cut without hands which strikes the idols of the world and smashes them into pieces and yet it itself grows to become a great mountain that fills the earth. Because Christ is risen from the dead, we have hope for eternity, but we also have hope for this world as well. The glass is continuing to fill.

I am sure you are aware, there are a lot of Christians who hold to the dispensational view of the glass. They are fascinated with prophetic timelines, the rapture, blood moons, the mark of the beast, the antichrist, Armageddon, etc. They are constantly trying to piece together the events of the end times. But I think, for the most part such a task is pointless.

For one, every single person who has dedicated themselves to studying such things has engaged in one time or another in speculation about when the rapture was going to be and when the end of the world was going to happen. And almost every time they thought they were special that the end of the world would happen in their lifetime, and every time those dates would come and go. Dispensationalism lends itself toward end times madness and false prophetic speculations.

Secondly, Jesus tells us that nobody knows the day or the hour when he comes. So why try?

Thirdly, now where does Scripture encourage us to spend our time engaging in end times speculation, but it tells us to be engaged in the business of the kingdom of God until Christ comes – whenever that may be.

Now none of that is to say that Scripture doesn't give us some sense of an order of events that will happen before the end of the world. However, it is not nearly as detailed as most think it is. We are not looking for an order of events like when the rapture takes place, and the rise of the antichrist, a peace treaty with Israel, Armageddon, the millennium and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem, etc etc.

The only place where we find an order of events that applies beyond the first century, is in our passage today in 1 Corinthians 15. Let us look at this text and then make some application.

V.20. *But in fact Christ is raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep.* Paul moves from the premise that Christ is raised from the dead to the belief that the rest of God's people who have fallen asleep will also rise from the dead. And he uses the imagery of the first fruits of the harvest to prove this. He uses this same imagery again in v. 23, saying, *But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, then at his coming, those who belong to Christ.*

What is the first-fruit? According to Lev. 23 the first sheaf of the crop that had sprung up was harvested and brought to God. Its purpose was to serve as a guarantee that the rest of the harvest was coming. So it is in God's redemption harvest. First, Christ the "first-fruits" has triumphed over death in his resurrection; then, the rest of his "crop," the redeemed, those who are in Christ, will be raised triumphantly at his second coming."¹

¹ <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/firstfruits/>

And this belief that because Christ was raised from the dead, we too will be raised from the dead, is based upon Covenant Theology. Paul says, “*For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so too in Christ shall all be made alive.*” Paul’s point here is to prove that just as it is certain that death came into the world through the sin of Adam, so too it is even more certain that resurrection will come into the world because of the resurrection of Jesus. Adam was the covenant head of all humanity, and all who are in him suffer death. Jesus is the new covenant head of a new humanity, and all who are in him will rise from the dead. Our resurrection is as certain as death.

In verse 22 Paul says *For as in Adam all die so in Christ shall all be made alive.* Paul does not mean that every single person will be resurrected to life. When he says in Christ all shall be made alive, he qualifies that in v. 23 and says at his coming *those who belong to Christ* will rise from the dead. So every one who is in Adam suffers the effects of the fall and dies. That is everyone. But for all who are in Christ they will be resurrected on the last day when he comes. That is not every single person.

And now verse 24 says, “*then at his coming those who belong to Christ. Then the end.*” And right here is your prophetic timeline and order of events. Christ resurrects. Then those who belong to him will be resurrected at his coming, then the end. That’s it. Shows over. When Christ comes again he will come to resurrect the bodies of the dead believers and that is the end.

I make this point because our dispensational friends don’t believe that is the end. Dispensationalism teaches that there will be three different returns of Christ, three resurrections, and three judgments, and then the end. They take a very simple order of events and they divide it up into three different segments. So they cannot actually say at Christ’s coming those who are in Christ will rise from the dead, and then the end.

They believe that Christ comes partially to rapture his church that is alive at that time, along with dead NT believers, and they will pass through the NT Church judgment. Then there will be a 7 year tribulation period culminating in the great tribulation, then the battle of Armageddon. Jesus returns again a second time, fully this time, to resurrect the bodies of the those who were converted during the tribulation, along with OT saints, and then holds a second judgment of the nations. Jesus then establishes the millennial kingdom only to then do all this stuff all over again. Satan is bound for 11000years, but at the end of the 1000 years he is released, and Jesus, although sitting on the throne in Jerusalem comes again in judgment against Satan throwing him into the fiery pit. And then there is a third resurrection of those who died during the millennial kingdom and all the wicked dead throughout all history, and there is a third great white throne judgment. And then the end.

How incredibly and unnecessarily complex. Jesus tells us plainly *“Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”* There is one resurrection at the end of history and both the righteous and the wicked will be resurrected at that time. The righteous to eternal life, and the wicked to judgment. This is exactly what Paul is referring to in this passage in 1 Corinthians 15.

Christ was the first to rise from the dead. Then, when he comes again, those who belong to him will also rise from the dead. And then the end. Now he doesn't address the issue of the resurrection of the wicked in 1 Cor. 15, but he certainly believed it. His point was not to talk about their judgment, but to provide the Corinthian believers with hope about their resurrection and with hope about what the history of the world is going to be ruled with the resurrected Christ on the throne.

And this is exactly what Paul goes into here, as he gives some important details about what is characteristic of the end. And incidentally, what he tells us about the end is actually about what has transpired throughout the rest of the history of the world in between the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of believers at the end.

Then the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

So what characterizes the end? Christ delivers the kingdom over to God the Father. And what has to happen for him to hand the kingdom over to the Father? He has to first destroy every rule, authority, and power, which of course refers the spiritual enemies of Christ that lurk behind the scenes by which earthly governments rule in wickedness.

Now some think that Christ will destroy all these enemies in one fell swoop at the end, or in three phases. However, according to 1 Cor. 2:6 these enemies are presently being defeated. It says, speaking of the wisdom of God in defeating of the enemies of Christ through his death and resurrection, that this was according to wisdom. *Although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age who are coming to nothing, or who are passing away.* Present tense. The passing away and destruction of the rulers of this age is currently happening. And if the rulers of this age understood that Christ's death and resurrection would be their undoing, they never would have crucified the Lord of Glory. Thus Paul says.

Then the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

When it says, "For he must reign," the word For is put there to describe the reason why Christ will destroy his enemies. And the reason is he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. Now where have we

heard that language before? That is Psalm 110:1 – the most quoted verse in the whole NT. What does it say in Psalm 110:1 – *The Lord said to my lord, sit at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.*

Paul quotes this Psalm and says “*For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.*” But the Psalm says, “*Sit at my right hand until I put all your enemies under your feet.*” Paul therefore equates Christ sitting at the right hand of God with his reign. And his reign consists of, believe it or not, destroying his enemies and putting them all under his feet. Does Christ reign only at the very end when he destroys his enemies? Does he reign only for a future 1000 years in physical Jerusalem. What is he doing now? No. The whole time in between His resurrection and him sitting down at the right hand of the Father at his ascension until he comes again and resurrects us IS the time of his reign. And for our dispensationalist friend, Peter makes it quite clear when he talks about the Davidic Covenant that God would place one of David’s descendants upon his throne he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of Christ, he says. Jesus Christ is sitting on the throne of David ever since he ascended to the right hand of the Father. The NT makes this absolutely clear.

Therefore we are not waiting for Jesus to reign. The reign of Jesus Christ is in between his first and second comings, which mean that we live right now during the reign of Christ, and that means the whole time of Christ’s reign until the end is characterized as Christ destroying his enemies and putting them progressively under his feet until the last enemy Death is finally destroyed.

According to the Greek in verse 26, even death itself is currently being abolished, and is not merely reserved for the end. Literally the verse can be translated as “*The last enemy that is being abolished is death.*” This action of abolishing death has already begun because Christ has been raised up as the first-fruits of the resurrection.

And Paul further alludes to Christ's present Lordship by quoting Psalm 8 saying, "*For God has put all things in subjection under his feet.*" And the *all things* that the Scriptures refer to here that are under his feet in Ps. 110 and Ps. 8 refers to the Devil, and the principalities and powers and rulers and authorities, and even the last enemy death, and everyone in between. With exception of God the Father, of course. All those enemies are currently, progressively, and continually being put under Christ's feet. And when he is done finally subduing all his enemies from the right hand of God, which is throne of David, Christ will hand the kingdom over to the Father because He is the supreme ruler over all.

I want to point out again that when Christ comes his reign is complete, and all his enemies are defeated. The Dispensationalist does not believe this. They believe that Christ is not reigning right now, but his reign begins when he comes Pre-Millennium, before the future millennial kingdom begins, and then all things will be in subjection to him. But if you believe that the millennium is actually right now, a symbolical number of time given to designate the time in between the two comings of Christ, then we see that the reign of Christ already began when he ascended into Heaven, not when he comes back to sit on a throne in Jerusalem.

Jesus is reigning over all things right now.

Matthew 28 the passage of the great commission – Remember what Jesus says right before he is about to ascend into Heaven to sit at the right hand of God. He is about to give the church her marching orders to tell her what she is supposed to be doing until he comes again. And he begins by assuring them of the victory of their mission. He says, *All authority in Heaven and Earth has been given to me, therefore Go, and disciple the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I command you. And I will be with you until the end of the age.*

The certainty of the victory of the Church's mission to disciple the nations is based upon Christ having all authority in heaven and Earth, and he is about to ascend to the place of his universal rule and dominion.

In Dan. 7 we see a prophecy of the ascension of Christ in to Heaven. And there it says this:

And behold, with the clouds of heaven

One like a Son of Man was coming,

And He came up to the Ancient of Days

And was presented before Him.

14th And to Him was given dominion,

Glory and a kingdom,

That all the peoples, nations and men of every language

Might serve Him

His dominion is an everlasting dominion

Which will not pass away;

And His kingdom is one

Which will not be destroyed.

Isa. Told us that the increase of his govt. there would be no end. Dan. Tells us his that at his ascension all peoples, nations, and languages will serve him, his dominion is forever and his kingdom will never be destroyed. These passages, and many others just like it, fill the Bible, and give us great hope about what is happening right now in between the two comings of Christ.

Paul quoted Ps 8 saying God put all things in subjection to him. Hebrews quotes this same verse saying, "*Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present we not see everything in subjection to him.* (And this is the problem that so many Christians have. They do not see *everything* in subjection to him, and so they assume that *nothing* has been put in subjection to him. They do not see *all* things under Jesus'

feet, and so they conclude that *nothing* is. And they despair. But we shall not despair.) Although we do not see everything in subjection to him, *we do see Jesus, and he is crowned with glory and honor*. And that is enough. If Jesus is alive, if Jesus is sitting at the right hand of God, then all things are currently being put under his feet, whether we see it in our lifetimes or not. Although I think we actually do see it in our lifetimes, but we just don't know how to interpret our own times rightly.

We view things that happen over a period of maybe 100 years. But if we view history in 500 year increments it becomes much easier to see the reign of Christ over all his enemies increasing as the kingdom of God continues to increase as well. There are more and more Christians every 100 years. There are more and more churches. And these things ought to inform our faith of an optimistic view of Jesus' reign in history. And we ought not to get discouraged about our own day. We ought to place our faith and hope in the resurrected and reigning King Jesus. For to him has been given all authority and power and dominion over every tribe, language, people, and nation for all time. That should cause us to have a long term optimism and hope for the world and the Gospel's influence in it. We should be people who believe the glass is continually being filled.

But not only should we have a long-term hope and optimism, but the resurrection and reign of Christ over all his enemies now, should affect the way you live now in the short term of your earthly life. Which is all we really are accountable for.

Paul uses himself and his ministry as an example of how one ought to live in the present in light of the hope of the resurrection and the present Lordship reign of Christ. He asks them the question in vs 30 *Why are we in danger every hour?* And again he offers a rhetorical protest saying to them, *I die every day*.

Now the point Paul is trying to make with his rhetoric about death is, Paul pours out his life and gives himself over to death every day if necessary, in order to fulfill his calling as an apostle. He is not afraid to die. For to live is Christ and to die is gain. Right? He knows that because Christ is reigning and has defeated death, he can give himself over to death in obedience to his calling and He does not have to worry about preserving his own life, because if he dies, God will raise him from the dead.

The certainty of Christ's victory over death allows Paul to give himself over to serving others with the Gospel, all the while willing and expecting and choosing to die physically, and dying unto self every day to make it happen. Because in his dying daily, death dies a bit more, and Christ's reign increases just a bit more. And we should therefore seek to do the same.

What is your calling? Are you a single person who is trying to figure out life? Then that is your calling right now. And you are freed at this point to seek the glory of the Lord without a diversion of your time and attention to your family. Throw yourself into doing something for the kingdom of Christ. Grow in your knowledge of the Lord, learn how to defend the faith, create a website, or revamp ours. Serve the church in your time and energy and money. God calls you to do something. Don't just sit around and wait until you are married to think that you can serve Christ and help increase his rule. Your time and energy and devotion are valuable to us now.

Are you married? Do you have children? Then this is the state of your calling, and you should give yourself unto your spouse. If you are tired and think that you don't have anymore to give, just ask yourself, will I die if I give a little bit more? If you won't die, then you have plenty to give. Paul gave himself over to death to fulfill his calling everyday. Are you dying every day to fulfill your calling as a husband or wife? Or mother or father?

Stop demanding stuff from your spouse, and give. Unto death if necessary. And stop withholding from your spouse in efforts to preserve your own life. Give, unto death. This is how Christ loved you, and this is how you ought to one another.

Forget romance, forget having all the feelings. Love is an action, and you promised to love your spouse with your actions. Stop using your feelings as an excuse to not love your spouse. Give yourself over unto death, and you will live. But you wonder how you will live if you give unto death? Well hopefully your spouse is giving also and the life they give to you will be your life, so there is no need to preserve your own. This is a beautiful image of the Love of God, and this is exactly how Jesus Christ reigns in the kingdom of God - through death and resurrection. If you are not dead yet for him to turn your physical death into resurrection, then willing choose to die to yourself and give of your life to another so God can turn your dying to self into resurrection glory and life. And in this way the glass become more and more filled. Amen.