

Gods Kingdom

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- [0 : 0 0] Let's turn back to the psalm that we read in Psalm 68 and reading again at verse 18.
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One person has described this psalm as a boisterous psalm. Another person has described it as a rushing cataract of a psalm. Now, as we see here that the composer of this psalm, that's a psalm of David, and many think that it was composed at the time when the ark was being brought back to Jerusalem from the house of Obadidim.
And it was certainly a time when there was great rejoicing and great celebration, because when you read through this psalm, there's a vibrance. There's something.
You cannot read this psalm and sort of say, Oh, well, the psalmist was in a very sort of maybe a tired mode, or that he was in a sort of where he was feeling a bit down.
- [1 : 3 3] And this is a psalm of absolute celebration. It's a psalm where you find that the whole passion is one of vibrance and one of thrill and energy.
And as we remember, if that was the occasion when the ark was being brought back, it was a time where David was so rejoicing that he actually was dancing before the ark.
He was an incredibly passionate man. And David didn't do anything in half measures. There was a vibrancy and an energy about David. And you find that in his life, that he was a man of great passion.
And now the opening verse of this psalm, and one of the reasons why people believe that it is something, that there is a connection with the ark, and if it is a psalm of David, that it is quite likely that this is the occasion.
When you read the first verse, God shall arise, his enemies shall be scattered, and those who hate him shall flee before him. These are the words, it's a direct quotation from the words of Moses.
- [2 : 4 5] And these words that Moses spoke whenever the ark set out in the wilderness, whenever the ark, whenever Israel were moving in the wilderness, it was time for them to move.
And remember how the ark would be carried out, and whenever the ark was to move, Moses spoke these words. We find it in Numbers.
And it says there, And whenever the ark set out, Moses said, Arise, O Lord, and let your enemies be scattered, and let those who hate you flee before you.
So as David ties in these words of Moses, it is in all probability, it is with the movement of the ark. And David follows through something of the history of Israel as God led his people through the wilderness into the land of promise, and eventually to Jerusalem.
And this psalm is highlighting God's power, God's sovereignty, God's rule, God's dominion, and also highlighting how God is working in his people and making his people glorious in this world.
- [3 : 5 9] Now, of course, so much of what happened in the Old Testament is speaking to us of something greater, and indeed of someone greater.

And that fulfillment, of course, is found in the Lord Jesus Christ. And there's no question, whatever, that the fulfillment of verse 18 is found in Jesus Christ.

You ascended on high. And that's one of the most glorious truths of the Christian faith, is the resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

That today, the Christ that we worship, the Christ that we serve, the Christ that we follow, is not in some tomb in the Middle East.

But that death couldn't hold him, the grave couldn't hold him, nothing could hold him, and that he rose triumphant, and that he is seated on the right hand, in glory and in majesty, and he is ruling, and he is building up his church.

[5 : 05] He's building up you today. You are part of his plan. He has a plan for his kingdom. And he has a plan for every member of his kingdom.

And he is fulfilling his purposes in the growth of that kingdom, in you and through you. Maybe today you're here in church, and you feel tired, you feel listless, you feel that your impact for good in the Christian faith is minimal, and you're saying to yourself sometimes, what am I about?

Remember, you are a vital part of God's kingdom, a growing kingdom, a kingdom that is being established, and indeed is the only kingdom that will ultimately endure.

Thy kingdom hath none end at all. That is never going to be said of any of the other kingdoms of this world. They will rise, they will fall, but God's kingdom is a kingdom that will endure forever and ever.

And you today in Jesus Christ are part of that kingdom. And I want you to remember that and to reflect upon what an opportunity, what a privilege, what a glory is attached to that.

[6 : 23] Now, you'll remember, if we were to go to the Gospels, that we would find there that the Lord Jesus Christ, that there was a period between the resurrection and his final ascension, a 40-day period, where Christ revealed himself constantly to his disciples.

When Jesus rose from the dead, when we would term the resurrection, we believe that in that period between the resurrection and the ascension, that Jesus was ascending to his Father, and that he was going back to his Father and coming back to earth.

And that was in this period of these days. And he was, in that period, he kept revealing himself to his disciples. He revealed himself not just to the eleven, but also to many others.

And he had to do that because they were to be eyewitnesses of the fact that he rose from the dead. But he didn't just appear to them and then disappear.

It tells us, for instance, in Acts, that in these revelations that he gave and these presentations of himself, that he was speaking about the kingdom of God.

[7 : 45] You know, that must have been quite an awesome thing to be there in the presence of the risen Christ. To have this person who had been dead, who had been taken down lifeless from the cross, and here he is in his very person, in his physical body, still in that body, and here he is speaking, teaching.

And he's teaching them about the kingdom of God. I'm sure they would never, ever forget. And that was, of course, it wasn't Jesus just showing himself, but he was teaching them many truths.

Now, when we think of a kingdom, we tend to think of a particular territory. We talk about our own kingdom here, the United Kingdom. And when you go through all the different nations and kingdoms of this world, you can shade them in into different colors and such like.

We tend to think of a kingdom as territory or as some geographical location. but you cannot really shade in the kingdom of God in a map of the world because the kingdom of God, it cuts through all countries and all cultures and all creeds and all languages and all races.

The kingdom of God is a spiritual kingdom that is made up of all the people of God throughout this world so that today you are here.

[9 : 20] But we can go all throughout Great Britain. We can go to France and go through, work our way right through Europe. We can go down to Africa.

We can go to America and North and South and the States. We can go right throughout the world. We can go to China and it doesn't matter where we go in the world.

We're finding that the kingdom is growing. It is being established and God's kingdom is on the march. God is on the march. Just as we read how he was going through marching as you marched through the wilderness while the Lord is still marching, marching through this world, bringing many, many, many souls into the kingdom.

Hundreds, thousands, millions. It's extraordinary how the Lord is at work all over the world.

Last week, I was in church in New York a day and morning and night. Two thousand at both services. There were five services in the day and I believe there were, now thinking, in that city, just out in that one particular church, ten thousand people.

[10 : 38] and that is multiplied all throughout this world. How little we're grasping and understanding of how the kingdom of God is marching and how it is spreading.

Glorious kingdom. And it will continue despite every obstacle and every hindrance and when we pick up our papers and when we follow the media we tend to think and when we look at how the world is we tend to think that the cause of Christ is finished.

And we look at things and we say, oh, they're dark days. But Jesus told us that the powers of hell, as he was speaking, remember when he was talking to Peter and how he was talking about how he was going to build this church and he said that the gates of hell, they were going to fight against that church but they wouldn't prevail.

The kingdom was going to be built despite every obstacle, despite every opposition, despite everything that will be put against it. As a kingdom it will be established.

And this growing kingdom where he will lead, where Jesus is leading a host of captives in your train or elsewhere it says we're captivity captive.

[12 : 00] And regarding this, you ascended on high. you remember how Jesus led his people, well, I should say, led the disciples out to Bethany and it was on the Mount of Olives that he ascended from them where he was on that mount.

And, of course, just by way of passing, it's interesting how many of the great experiences in the Bible took place on mountains and again even in the Lord's own life.

His most famous sermon was delivered. We call it the Sermon on the Mount. It probably was more on a hill rather than a mountain, but it was still, it's still termed the Sermon, this most famous sermon, the Sermon on the Mount.

You remember the night before he chose the disciples, he went up into a mountain, away up into this mountain, all night to pray.

It was on a mountain that he was transfigured, that great moment of glory. It was on a hill that he was crucified, the hill Calvary. And here it is on Mount Olivet, on the Mount of Olives, that he ascends to glory.

[13 : 18] Again, if you were to go through the Bible, many of the Old Testament saints had memorable experiences on the mountain. It was on a mountain that Abraham was going to sacrifice Isaac.

And as he was preparing the altar and preparing Isaac for that sacrifice, you remember how God intervened and God revealed himself to Moses, to Abraham.

Again, it was on a mountain that Moses met with God. Remember the 40 days where Moses was in the presence of the Lord, where he was given the table of the law. Remember Elijah, the awesome experience, that Elijah had, again up on the mountain as God was recommissioning Elijah, giving him more work to do.

Anyway, it tells us in the Gospels that Jesus, as he commissioned his disciples and sent them out into the world, that he lifted up his hands and blessed them.

Before he ascended, that would be something they would never forget. the final parting was one where Jesus lifted up his hands and blessed them.

[14 : 35] And you know, our parting, I'll say that, our parting in life is very important because we never will know whether, you know, when we part from one another on a daily, and often many times in the day, and so often our partings we just take for granted.

But we never know whether the parting that we make is going to be a final parting or not. And that is why it is so important that we should always part from one another in peace, part from one another seeking blessing upon that parting.

That's how we find Jesus parting. It's by way of blessing. blessing. And may we follow that example so that when we part from one another, that it isn't an anger, that we don't part from one another with a bitterness in our heart, but that we part from one another in peace.

Very important. That's how Jesus parts from his disciples. And remember how it says as they were looking upon him, he was lifted up and a cloud took him out of their sight.

He was just lifted up. It gives the very language there about how he was lifted up, this ascending. You ascended on high, but when we go and read about the actual ascension, that word that he was lifted up, the actual language would indicate that this was actually a work of the Father in lifting Jesus up.

[16 : 09] And of course this ascension, this public ascension, this ascension which we read about here, which David is writing about, so many years before Jesus walked in this world, this public and of course it had to be a public ascension because Jesus is showing here to his disciples that he is finally physically departing from them, not spiritually but physically.

And the disciples, remember, as they were gazing up into heaven, they were looking up, they were told, remember how something wonderful, angels came and they were told, this Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.

Isn't that amazing? Just as Jesus rose up and ascended up into heaven, so he will come again.

He will descend and come with the holy angels. And it's an awesome thought because every eye will see him. Not many saw Jesus ascend, but everybody will see Jesus descend.

We're told in scripture that every eye will see him. And for many people it will be a day of consternation, a day of panic, a day that they hoped that they would never see.

[17 : 40] because every person who rejected Jesus and every person who has mocked Jesus and laughed at Jesus and every person who has denied the very existence of God will have a complete change of tune.

But you know the scripture tells us so solemnly for many it's going to be too late and they're going to be crying to the hills to fall on them and to the mountains to cover them so that they will escape from the wrath of the Lamb.

Because this Jesus who returns is coming as judge. He came into this world as we've been looking at that as we've been through the gospel of Luke. He came into this world as the Savior. His name is Jesus for he shall save his people from their sins.

And that's where we are today. We have the Savior. We still offer the Savior because we're still all on mercy's ground. But there's going to come a day when Jesus will return and he's coming as judge.

We sang about that in Psalm 98. It's going to be a different day, a different coming, a different returning. And so we find here that you ascended on high, leading, just we'll have to run through this, leading a host of captives in your train, taking captivity captive.

[19 : 03] Isn't that a wonderful thing? All these things that held us captive. Jesus has taken them captive. So that captivity has been made captive.

All these awful things that sin and all the effect of sin, the impact of sin in our lives. You see, sin enslaves us and captures us, it devours us, it shackles us.

We can't break its power on our own. That's why Jesus came. He came to deliver us, not just from what sin is in itself, in its fortune, in its capturing power, but also all that sin eventually brings.

Because we're told that the wages of sin is death. So if you follow sin into its ultimate conclusion, that is death, it is a grave, it is hell, it is all these things, and we're powerless to deal with them.

But Jesus came, and Jesus met every single one of these enemies. And the way he met them was by submitting himself under them, under its power.

[20 : 26] He submitted himself to sin, not that he became a sinner, but he submitted by taking our sin upon himself, so that he stood in our place as our substitute.

And he submitted under death, and he submitted under the grave, and by submitting to our sin upon the cross, he endured what constitutes hell, where God's wrath was poured upon him, and where every comfort and support was removed.

But by submitting under, he defeated, his power defeated, and that is why he has taken captive, led into captivity, all these enemies that are so against against us.

And that's a great freedom in the gospel. That is why today we're able to say, yes, we don't look forward to death, and there is within us something that recoils, because none of us want to die.

you're here today as a Christian, and you say to yourself, I don't want to die. Maybe somebody may say, well, that's not right for a Christian to think like that.

[21 : 52] Well, I think it is. The Bible says no man ever yet hated his own flesh. We have a natural inclination, there's a self-preservation which is natural to us, and the death is something we recoil from, because we do not look forward to the separation of our soul from our body, but we are able to look at death, although it is an enemy, and realize that in Jesus Christ victory has been won, and that the severing of soul and body is temporary.

There is to be a reuniting because of what Jesus has done, because just as he rose from the dead, so will we, our bodies will rise to be reunited with our soul.

And so, here is part of this great victory, leading a host of captives in your train, and receiving gifts among men. Now, some make dispute of this line because they say it seems to go against what Paul says in Ephesians, where it says he gave gifts to men, rather than receiving gifts among men.

However, the very language, again, here, this word receiving can carry with it the idea of receiving in order to give, so that there is no contradiction.

And so that's what Jesus has done, just as a conqueror, supposing a great general in battle. And there he has won, and his army has won, and he divides spoils amongst the leaders, and they in turn divided amongst their troops.

[23 : 42] And that's what Jesus has done. He is, as it were, is giving us spoils. He is giving us what he has won. He's bequeathing to us what he has won.

He didn't win it for himself. He won it for us. And so he has done that. But he is giving it to us in order that he will receive himself.

Because he will receive gifts from us. He gives us gifts, and he gives us the supreme gift of the Holy Spirit. But that in turn, in order that Jesus will receive fruit to his glory in our lives.

Because that's what the Holy Spirit does. The Holy Spirit is working within us, producing fruit to the glory of God. And it says, receiving gifts among men, even among the rebellious.

That's what the Lord does. Amongst the rebels. He turns the rebels to be his friends. It's a wonderful thing. Complete change of heart.

[24 : 54] You know, sitting in here today, many of you, with your hand in your heart, you'd have to say, you know, there was a day, and I was a rebel. I did not love the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was a rebel. Some of you may not have been great rebels. Some of you may have had a great drawing and sympathy to the kingdom. But some of you in here, the last thing you wanted was to have Jesus Christ as your Lord.

You were rebellious through and through. You didn't want anything to do with becoming a Christian. But today, you're sitting here in the church under his word, and this is where you want to be, because you love the Lord.

Why? Because he has made the rebel his friend. And that's his power. That's what he's able to do. And that's why we must never turn our back upon anybody.

You may be looking into your own home, you may be looking into your own neighborhood, you may be looking to people you work with, and you say, oh, it's impossible for them to become Christians. No, it's not.

[26 : 13] This power is able to subdue the most rebellious. you go through scripture, and you look at some of the people there, Manasseh, who caused the streets of Jerusalem to run red with the blood of the saints.

Wholesale slaughter. He sacrificed in the temple, offensively to the Lord. He hated, he tried to obliterate every sign of God in the land.

And yet he turned and repented towards the Lord. Saul was trying to kill every person who loved Jesus. And he became that great apostle to the Gentiles.

We can never write people off. God's grace is so powerful, it changes people who loved them. See, that's what the Lord does.

Who loved us. Remember what it says in Revelation? Who loved us and washed us from our sins. We've said this before, but we tend to love what is attractive, what is beautiful.

[27 : 26] We don't tend to love what is ugly and repulsive. We would rather put it the other way around, who washed and made lovely and clean and then loved.

That's not what the Lord did. It's when we were ugly and dirty and rebels and enemies. He loved us and washed us from our sins.

Isn't that beautiful? Wonderful. That's what He does. And so He makes the rebels even among the rebellious that the Lord may dwell there, dwell among them.

You know, in a sense you can always, when you're reading this, it almost takes you back to the garden. It's something of peace. the Lord may dwell there. Because you remember when God made man.

And there's that beautiful description back in Genesis where we read about how the Lord came and how He walked with the man. And He walked in the garden in the cool of the day.

[28 : 28] You see, the Lord loves to fellowship with His people. The Lord made us. I think sometimes we forget that. The Lord made us for Himself. And the Lord takes a delight in His people.

The King, we're told, greatly desires thy beauty. You may be saying, who, me? Yeah. Yes, that's it, you. He desires your beauty, the beauty of Christ that is in you.

The Lord desires to fellowship with His people. He's made you for Himself. We can never forget that. And we must never forget that.

That is going to be at the very heart of heaven, is the fellowship, the eternal fellowship and delight with our Lord, with our Savior. The King desires your beauty.

Love loves to walk with love. Can two walk together except they be agreed? The Bible asks that question.

[29 : 37] And that is how it is only when oppression comes to faith in Jesus Christ that they really begin to walk with Jesus, to walk with Him. Well, here is this great King, that the Lord may dwell there.

This is what the Lord, this is my rest, here still I'll stay, for I do love it well. Remember how it's talking about that in Psalm 132, of how this was the abode of the Lord, and He wants to dwell with this people.

Remember on the road to Emmaus, the disciples were pleading with Jesus to come in with them. They constrained Him, and He went in and He abode with them, to dwell.

When it says the Lord comes to dwell, it isn't just for a fleeting moment. He comes to live there. and when Jesus saves a passion, He comes to live through the Spirit in your heart.

Has Jesus come to live in your heart today? If not, ask Him to. Will you? Will you ask Him, Lord, please, please, just like the disciples constrained Him, the ideas, they took hold of Him, they wouldn't let Him go, come on, you've got to come in with us.

[30 : 57] And the Lord always responds to that kind of asking. Will you ask Him today like that? And asking that will not take no for an answer, but plead with Him to come in with you.

Let us pray. Oh, Lord of God, we pray to enrich us and bless us in the gospel. We give thanks for the Word of God and remind us of who Jesus is, what Jesus has done and what Jesus has done for His people.

Lord, take us all home safely, we pray, and guide us and keep us every step of the way. Watch over us and do us good and cleanse us from all our sin. In Jesus' name we ask all.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.
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