

“Kingdom Come”
Revelation 11:14-19
February 1, 1998
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If I asked you if you ever get discouraged with life it would probably be a little like asking if dogs bark.

The answer is an obvious “yes”.

There are few people who won’t at least privately concede that life can get discouraging.

Most of us would rather not admit that we ever get depressed but sometimes it is very difficult to put on the “happy” face and act like everything in life is just “peachy”.

When we look at people who have lost loved ones, who have been chronically ill, or who have lost their jobs, for example, we think to ourselves “it is no wonder they are discouraged or even depressed” - or we marvel if they aren’t.

It is tempting to stave off feelings of discouragement and depression by simply getting busier.

Some people party harder, drink more, spend money, change jobs, start a new hobby, do whatever they can to change their surroundings hoping they can drown out the flatness, the dullness, the grayness of life.

It doesn’t seem to matter what age you are - life can be frightening.

Children and young people worry about growing up.

Young adults worry about marriage and jobs.

Older adults worry about relationships and financial security and even sickness and death.

It’s relatively common for people to slowly realize that life is threatening and even discouraging - And a low-grade fear or depression sets in and life becomes a chore - harder and harder to have the energy for.

Can anything truly overcome that?

Is it possible not only to “put on” a happy face but feel a genuine happiness?

Is it possible not only to “make it through” another day but to want to?

Is it possible not just to “cope” but to thrive?

In the book of Revelation that we have been studying together on Sunday mornings, the author, the Apostle John, has been describing some very terrible days that are coming to this earth.

Jesus called it the “great tribulation”.

In other places in the Bible it is called the “Day of the Lord”.

It is a period of time just before Jesus comes again.

At one point, John described some of those days in this symbolic way:

“There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black...the whole moon turned blood red, and the stars in the sky fell to earth... The sky receded like a scroll rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. Then (people) hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb. For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”

John described some of the physical devastation that would befall the earth: a great firestorm, devastation in the oceans, drinking water being poisoned, darkness on the entire earth.

And worse yet he described demonic powers being released to torment and kill millions and millions of unbelievers.

And, as we saw last week, even believers will be opposed, discriminated against, persecuted and even killed for their faithfulness to Jesus.

Those are frightening descriptions.

Anyone living in those days and even thinking about living in those days would have reason to fear them - would have reason to wonder how it will be possible to stand it under those conditions - how it will be possible to bear up under such pressure.

Wouldn't fear, discouragement, and even depression be the likely experience of those believers?

God knows the very normal human tendency to be emotionally overwhelmed by those experiences - maybe to be overwhelmed by your experiences in life.

In Revelation, as I said, John has been describing some horrific things that will happen on this earth - and what he has been describing has been getting steadily worse.

And if what had already been described wasn't bad enough, after the judgments, announced by the first six trumpets, we come to 11:15 and we read:

11:15 "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet..."

What we expect with that trumpet sound is a description of more trouble, more devastation, even worse conditions than before.

But what we get, unexpectedly, is something very different.

It's as if John knows how discouraged his readers could be with what they have been hearing.

He knows how hard life has been for some of them.

He knows the opposition to their Christianity some of them have already faced.

And so in the midst of all of that - John gives his readers a glimpse into the future.

For just a minute he jumps, in time, right over the judgment of the 7th trumpet, he passes over the difficult period still to come and he gives a preview of something so grand, so real, so powerful, so exciting, so captivating, and so encompassing that when they see it, it will put their present and future experiences in perspective.

It will revolutionize their attitudes toward life -even difficult life.

The fears of life will subside, the discouragement will lift, the flatness or dullness of life will dissipate.

With this vision of the future their hearts take on confidence and their lives are invested with purpose.

The same can be true for us!

Lose sight of this vision and I can almost guarantee that life will eventually overwhelm you - great tribulation or not.

What is this vision that can so dramatically alter our perspective and so radically change our attitudes about life here and now?

It is Jesus finally reigning as King over this physical world and everyone in it.

Some people have the mistaken idea that when Jesus comes again it just means that all God's people go to heaven and we sit on clouds, playing harps and singing forever.

Or even if they know it isn't that - they don't know what it is.

But the Bible declares that when Jesus comes again he will set up his kingdom on earth -and he will reign as king over all and every one.

Here's the way John describes it:

11:14b-17

"...there were loud voices in heaven which said, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders who were seated on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, saying "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign."

Have you ever heard the saying: "It's all over bar the shouting"? - meaning for all practical purposes the event has finished and all that remains is the celebration?

A week ago, in the Superbowl game, with just seconds left on the clock in the fourth quarter and Green Bay seven points behind, Bret Favre launched a pass on 4th down.

All of Denver held its collective breath - until that pass was knocked to the ground.

At that point there were still 20 seconds left on the clock - but it was over bar the shouting.

In fact, if I remember correctly, the shouting began.

That's what's happening here - there are still seconds left on the clock, there is still work to be done on earth - but so certain is the outcome that John sees into the future and hears the shouting begin.

And everyone in heaven shouts: "the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord!"

Like I said several weeks ago in reflecting the theme of the entire book of revelation: JESUS WINS!

In the midst of lives that could lead to discouragement and fear, weariness and depression - John says, "Look ahead, see into the future, envision what is most certainly coming."

"The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord".

Do you hear the verb tenses in that statement?

John is saying that he sees it as having already happened.

The kingdom of the world HAS BECOME the kingdom of our Lord"

The kingdom of the world is the world as we presently experience it.

Notice it isn't kingdom's (plural) of this world but kingdom (singular).

God knows that behind all the evil of this world, whether through corrupt political rulers or through other social forces - behind all the evil of this world stands one evil source - Satan, himself.

God said it this way in I John 5:19: "We know that... the whole world is under the control of the evil one."

Through all the ages, God's people have had to withstand the onslaught of the evil one directly and indirectly through those he controls.

In this age, until Jesus comes again, God is sovereign but he has not yet eradicated his opposition - Satan and those who follow Satan are opposed to God and God's people.

In the wickedness of their hearts they still imagine they can usurp God's place and actually be governors of their own lives and futures.

Since the Garden of Eden a battle has been carried on by Satan, attempting to wrest control of this world from God.

He attempted it in the Garden of Eden - .

He attempted it in Egypt by trying to keep the Israelites captive.

He attempted it with the forces against Joshua trying to keep the Israelites out of Canaan.

He attempted it by using the surrounding nations to destroy Israel

He attempted it with his opposition to the rebuilding of the wall and Temple in Nehemiah's and Ezra's days.

He attempted it through Herod by attempting to kill the messiah when he was first born.

He attempted it by tempting Jesus to forego the cross and just enjoy his rights.

He attempted it by killing Jesus.

He resisted the apostles time after time - not wanting the gospel to spread.

He resisted the Great Awakening with the Revolutionary War.

Time and time again he has used war to interrupt revivals in this country and elsewhere.

He continues to attempt it by thwarting God's people and the spread of the gospel.

He continues to attempt it by blinding people to the truth of the gospel.

He continues to try to thwart the purposes of God by causing wars, famines, oppressive policies - anything to get people to resist God.

He is opposed to you knowing and following Jesus.

But John writes, Look - I see that day when that "kingdom" is defeated, when it is handed over to Jesus.

The prophets foretold that day:

In Daniel 2 Nebuchadnezzar had a dream of a large statue - an enormous dazzling statue, awesome in appearance with a head of gold, chest of silver, belly and thighs of bronze and legs of iron and feet of iron mixed with clay.

Then a rock cut out (of a mountain) but not by human hands (from God) smashed the statue.

When Daniel interpreted the dream he said, "The God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed...It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end but it will itself endure forever. This is the meaning of the vision of the rock cut out of a mountain, but not by human hands..."

In Daniel 7 it says, "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." (Dan 7:26-27)

Zechariah 14

In a description of the final battle between the Lord and those who oppose him we read, "The Lord will be the king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name." (v9)

Paul said it this way in I Corinthians 15:24-25

"Then the end will come when he (Jesus) hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet."

John says, "I see it!" I see that day when all that was predicted comes to pass - when Satan no longer holds sway in this world -when Jesus is Lord.

So overawed by the reality of this are the 24 Elders (representing all the people of God) that they fall to their faces in worship.

It has happened - They cry out, "You have taken your great power and have begun to reign." It's done.

Notice please that while we are accustomed to saying, “the Lord God who is and who was and who is to come, John omits the last - He says the “Lord who is and who was” - because, in John’s vision, the “to come” has come - it now IS! - Jesus is Lord - Jesus wins!

And seeing into that future John says he hears those heavenly voices declaring that the time has come for judging the dead and rewarding God’s faithful people.

In Revelation 20 John describes this judgment in more detail:

“Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence... And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne and books were opened... The dead were judged according to what they had done, as recorded in the books. (cont.)

The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then (they all) were thrown into the lake of fire... If anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

Back in chapter 11, John is saying that he sees it - it happens.

But not only are unbelievers judged but Christ-followers are rewarded.

And in chapters 21 and 22 which we will look at in the future, we see what that reward is like - it is to live in the presence of the Lord Jesus - him physically present with us.

John says, “Do you see it?” - do you believe it?

Can you imagine that day?

What will it be like when this world, THIS world, is ruled by Jesus?

When Lakewood, Littleton, Jefferson County governments are ruled by Jesus?

When the school district is controlled by His word and will?

When businesses are run according to his desire?

When homes are lived by his love?

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray he said pray this way:
“Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed by thy name. Thy kingdom come!”
Do you pray that? “Thy kingdom come.”?

It is true that when we pray “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” we are asking that God’s will be obeyed now in our lives just as his will is obeyed in heaven.

But more precisely the prayer is that the kingdom of God in its fullness would come - that Jesus would come again and establish his everlasting kingdom.

Do you pray - “Thy kingdom come?” Do you want him to come?

Yes, there are some who want the end to come but for the wrong reason.

I wonder if some of us want Jesus to come because we want to escape.

Some grow tired, weary, discouraged and they give up and just wish Jesus would come and take them away from all this.

When I see John’s words here - I don’t see that kind of escapism

- I see optimism, confidence, strength, encouragement, energy to persevere - to press on.

Certainly we will be tempted to be discouraged and defeated.

Satan will throw everything at us that he can to try to get us to quit before the end.

But we must resist it.

We are called to struggle but not give up,

to persevere, not bail out,

to remain faithful in service, not quit before Jesus comes.

In Luke 12 Jesus said the wise, faithful manager was the one who was doing his Master’s will right up until the time Jesus comes again - there is no retirement in the kingdom of God.

God wrote: "Do not lose heart in doing good, for in due time you will reap if you do not grow weary."

John's vision of the future encourages us to say, "I can remain faithful, I can keep on serving, I can bear up under even the most difficult circumstances because my efforts matter and my reward is certain."

And we can pray, "thy kingdom come" not to escape but because we so much long for that day when everything we are working for will be complete.

Who would want to forever plan a house and never build it.

Who would want to forever plan a trip and never take it.

Who would want to forever invest his life and never see the results.

I want Jesus to come again because I want to see the day when Jesus is King of everything - when every knee bows to him - when my own heart is singly focused - when people will know the perfect control of Jesus in their lives.

I know there also people - often young people who don't pray "thy kingdom come" because their desire for this life is stronger than their desire for what is to come.

They think, "I want to get married, I want to have children, I want to do some things before the end comes."

I'm convinced such thinking is because we are so limited in our understanding of what it will be like when Jesus comes again.

All those things, I've mentioned that we'd like to experience in this life, are good but they will pale in comparison to having Jesus here.

Do I understand at all what it will mean for Jesus to be king in every country in this world?

Can I appreciate how infinitely better it will be?

Imagine the lepers, the beggars, the homeless, the diseased of India or Mexico when Jesus is King.

Imagine Rwanda, Bosnia, Algeria with Jesus as King.

Think about the Five Points area of Denver, Capitol Hill, or the ghettos and slums of the great cities of the world - what will happen to them when Jesus is king?

Imagine the government of the U.S. when Jesus' will is being done.

Can you fathom the change in our daily news when Jesus is in control of this world?

How will television and motion pictures be altered?

Think about the homes where last night in drunkenness and frustration men beat their wives and children - where children lashed out at parents - now imagine those homes when Jesus' love is controlling every word and action.

Consider the homes where people were deathly ill or where loved ones had recently died - Imagine those homes after the resurrection - when Jesus is here.

Look at the hospitals, the police stations, the prisons - what do you see?

They're empty - there's no need for them.

Think about your business, your company - what will it be like to go to work when the word of God is perfectly and happily obeyed by boss and worker alike?

Now I ask you, "How could anyone in his or her right mind not want that?"

Thy kingdom come - Come Lord Jesus.

Jesus has not yet returned because he is patient with those who resist him - wanting them to know something of that future kingdom in their lives now - so they may participate fully in it when he does come.

That's why we have evangelism teams.

It's why we teach the gospel in our Sunday School classes.

It's why we pray for our neighbors.

It's why we have sent the Haleys, the Newcombs, the Bolthouses, the Loseys, Tevebaughs, the Engels and others around the world.

85% of us have made no investment in our "staff" missionaries - that frightens me - what does it say about our vision of the future?

We know Jesus is coming and we want others to experience that coming kingdom.

Now that gives my life purpose - Everything I invest, is for the purpose of preparing for the coming Kingdom of Jesus.

If we are living life fearful, discouraged, and half depressed - it may be because we have lost sight of the future.

Here's the way it is said in Hebrews:

"Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

If I keep my eyes fixed firmly on Jesus as the one who is most certainly coming to this earth and who will reign here,
if I realize that my investments of time, energy and money, here and now, have an impact on that day, discouragement and lethargy will not control my life but confidence and energy will.

Life matters because Jesus is coming.

Will you pray that God will impress these truths on your mind?

Will you ask him to make them so real in your imagination that the picture is always before you? "The Kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord"

Will you ask him to shape your attitude and actions today, by the reality of Jesus certain coming?