

1. Is Our Power and Security Found in an Earthly Kingdom?

a. “Is it in this *time?*”

i. This is an honest question based upon the “promise from the Father” to which Jesus referred

1. With every promise there are subsequent questions like this.

2. Is it soon? How soon?

a. This question shows two things:

b. The disciples trusted God to keep his promise.

i. They depended upon Jesus, the Messiah, to bring about the promises of God made to the patriarchs

ii. This is great faith – and notice that Jesus doesn’t reprimand them for asking

c. The disciples were anxious for things to be made right.

i. They saw the injustice of their current social sphere: Rome ruling, Pilate killing people in the Temple,

ii. They saw the brokenness of poverty and death

1. They had seen Jesus turn both on their heads, and wanted to know if he was going to consummate God’s total restoration

2. We can relate to this, can’t we?

d. When we see injustice, sin, man harming man or harming himself – do we not also cry out, “Is it now?!”

ii. The disciples of Jesus really, really wanted answers about the details of God’s Kingdom and the restoration of their security

1. The reason that we want to know the details of God’s promises is because we want to feel secure

a. We tend to feel more certain if we know more detail

2. imperfect form shows an ongoing attitude and questioning

a. They really, really, wanted to know *when* God was going to make all things right

iii. Asking God such a question may actually be a part of faith

1. It expresses dependence upon God.

2. It expresses depending upon God to keep His promise.

b. Are you restoring the kingdom *to Israel?*

i. This is a question of power – “Will you restore power *to Israel?*”

1. They are looking to return to what they perceived to be a former condition of greatness: the Davidic and Solomonic power of the geopolitical nation of Israel.

a. We know this because Jesus had been teaching them about the kingdom *of God* for years, and they specifically ask about *Israel’s* power.

b. They knew that the outpouring of the Spirit was the ushering in of the promised age of blessing for “Judah and Jerusalem” and judgment upon the nations

i. Joel 2:28-3:21

c. What they don’t get, yet, is the *scope* of God’s kingdom.

i. It is far greater than earthly Israel

ii. Jesus is bringing in the nations *to Himself*, the true Israel (Matt 2:15, ‘out of Egypt I called my Son’, referring to Jesus rather than Israel)

2. This connection to “Israel” informs us as to what their expectations were

a. They still didn’t understand that the Kingdom of God was far superior in nature and extent as the old kingdom of Israel

b. They were still looking for political and social power over others (see James and John for reference)

i. These are the same guys who wanted to call down fire from heaven to consume their enemies (Luke 9:54)

- ii. These are the same guys who were embittered towards one another as they strove for power and position (Mark 10:35-41)
 - iii. Even as Jesus was going towards the cross, they were arguing about which one of them was the greatest (Luke 22:24)
 - ii. Though the question of timing may be noble, the context and content of their expectations were not.
 - 1. Though they desired God to fulfill His promise of restoration, the disciples still do not understand what Jesus had taught them about the Kingdom of God
 - a. “The kingdom of God is like a man who cast seed upon the soil. He sleeps and rises night and day; the seed sprouts and grows; he knows not how. The earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain within the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, for the time has come.” (Mark 4:26-30)
 - 2. The Kingdom pervades quietly, unseen, slowly
 - a. You can transform a field quickly, with explosives, or you can transform a field slowly by planting seeds
 - b. Both transform the field, but only one brings life
 - iii. For what restoration do we long?
 - 1. Are we longing for a renewed powerful geopolitical nation still born in the effects of sin?
 - 2. Or, do we want something NEW? A NEW Eden! A NEW nation! A NEW humanity!
 - a. Revelation 5:9-10 – “new song” of “a new kingdom of priests” from those “purchase by His blood from every type of peoples”
 - b. Ephesians 2:11-18 – “one new humanity”
 - c. 1 Peter 2:9-10
 - 3. To depend upon a restoration to a former way of political power and economic strength as their hope receives a rebuke from Jesus
 - a. Note how Jesus answers their question with an answer about power – *but not the power which they assumed*
 - i. It was a greater power – the power of God’s Spirit to bring about reconciliation between all peoples and God through the proclamation of the reign of Christ Jesus
- c. The desire to know from God where our security is going to come from and when it will finally be secure is a legitimate concern
 - i. God has promised to grant us rest
 - 1. Now we live by faith in what we cannot see
 - a. “How long, O Lord?” is a common refrain when the people of God suffer in this world
 - i. It is recalled in Revelation 6:9-11 – the martyrs (witnesses) who were murdered for their witness
 - ii. They are told to “rest a little longer until the number of their fellow servants and brothers who were to be killed as they had been should be complete”
 - b. God never reprimands the kind of frustration and exhaustion with the presence of evil which expresses itself in such a question to God
 - i. Hab 1:2 – “How long, O Lord, will I cry out to you and you will not hear? Or cry out, ‘Violence!’, and you will not save?!”
 - ii. Hab 2:1 – “I will take my stand at my watch-post and station myself on the tower, and look out to see what he will say to me, and what I shall answer [back] when he answers me.”
 - c. He does, however, answer that His sovereign power and wisdom is enough to rest upon.
 - i. Hab 2:4 – the LORD answers him, “Behold! His soul is puffed up; it is not right within him, but the righteous one shall live by his faith”
 - ii. Hab 3:16-19 – Habakkuk recalls the power of God’s creative acts and His redemptive power to rescue His people and responds with terror:

- d. While we may want the day of evil to cease, both within our own hearts and outside of ourselves, we entrust ourselves to the God who laid death to death on the cross and hope only in Him
 - i. We wait for Him as our hope
 - ii. “When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you will also be revealed with Him, in glory.” (Col 3:4)
2. But the promise is that one day we will see what we cannot believe (euphemism)
 - a. Habakkuk 1:5
- ii. But rather than live by faith in God’s promises and timing, we are constantly tempted to “flee to Egypt” to “run to horses/chariots” as our power and security
 1. We do this by putting our security in the hands of many different things
 - a. Money/Retirement –
 - i. “Pastor, is your future secured? Click our ‘learn more’ button to download a free investment that will teach you all about Gold IRA’s and what they can do for you.” (*Church Leaders* advertisement)
 - ii. The “peace of mind” guarantee – wow!
 - b. Strength/Force –
 - i. Inner strength – “The only person who can hurt you is you.” (Gary Zukav, new-age guru on Oprah.com)
 - ii. Outer strength – “When a Svalinn dog becomes the newest member of your family, there is an amazing sense of comfort and security that enters your life.” (Svalinn.com)
 - c. Politics/Government – “This is our last chance...”
 - i. If you were devastated, anxious, fearful, and wrathful because your candidate didn’t win November 8th, you may have been putting too much security in the hands of your earthly government.
 - ii. If you were elated, overly-relieved, triumphing, or ecstatic because your candidate did win last week, you also may have been putting too much security in the hands of your earthly government.
 - d. Be involved politically, Church, for we are blessed to live under an earthly system which gives us a representative voice in government
 - i. But do not be deceived that our hope is in them!
 1. Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help and rely on horses, who trust in chariots because they are many and in horsemen because they are very strong, but do not look to the Holy One of Israel or consult the LORD! (Isa. 31:1)
 - ii. Neither shall we ever turn to coercion as a means of transforming hearts, for our hope is not in any power but the Word of God!
 1. “The gospel is the power of God for salvation, for the Jew first and also for the Greek” (Rom 1:16)
 2. The Law can restrain a heart’s actions, but it cannot transform a heart’s desires.
 - e. This is why, in this particular political season, it is absolutely imperative that we recognize together, with proper humility and eyes set upon the promises of God, that though we may differ on political issues between one another, *we share the same Christ*
 - i. Debate together, discuss together, dialogue together regarding values, righteousness, goodness, error, the need for change, all of which political structures and hawkers seek to answer as well
 - ii. Yet, do not let these become squabbles, contentious divisions, or give the Devil a foothold to raise the question of your brother’s sanctification in your heart, for our unity is not bound up in donkeys or elephants, crowns or constitutions, but solely in the blood-bought deed of His cross

2. The Power Belongs to God Alone

- a. It is not for you to know times and epochs
 - i. The details and the implementation of God's Kingdom belong to God, not to you
 1. God sets all things about "by His own authority"
 - a. This phrase brings the disciples back to their proper place
 - b. The Kingdom of God does not give absolute authority or knowledge to the citizens of the Kingdom – it remains in the hands of God alone
 2. To speculate about times and dates is useless and impotent – the just shall live by faith
 - b. Which the Father places by his own authority
 - i. The Father literally "places" or "sets up" all things
 1. Every age, every cultural boundary of power, influence, and dominion is not merely ordained or approved by God, but "placed" by God
 2. One gets the image of a workman, a craftsman, an artisan placing every cut glass into the mosaic, every color onto the canvas, every brick onto another
 - a. He does these things to finish the work which he set forth to complete according to the sound intention of his own mind, imagination, and desire
 - b. Eph 1:11
 - c. Acts 4:26-28
 - ii. God commands times, epochs, ages, nations, peoples, economies, cultures, subcultures, by sheer power of His own command
 1. Deut 32:8
 2. Acts 17:26 – *horizo* and *prostasso* – "marked out delineation" and "commanded" (instruction/military)
 - iii. How does the truth that God places all of Reality in the places, times, and forms which He desires by His own authority, give us reason to both be humble and courageous?
 1. Humble because that is a LOT of power – our power in comparison to that is infinitesimally small
 - a. Caught in a riptide makes one fear the power of water
 - b. Caught in an Oklahoma thunderstorm makes one fear the power of the clouds
 - c. Beholding the power of God makes one fear the power of the Almighty
 2. Courageous because that Sovereign God is good
 - a. "Whom have I in the heavens, but you?" (Ps 73:25-28, combined with 'fear the Lord')
 - b. Psalm 16
 - c. That the thunderstorm of God's wrath was taken upon Himself *that we might be brought through the storm safely* – that is mercy and goodness
 - iv. It also means to fear history or the future is unbelief in the sovereign command of God over the nations and peoples
 1. This lack of our personal power, of knowledge and authority which only belongs to God, is contrasted with a power that IS given to us by God
 - c. You will Receive *power* From the Holy Spirit
 - i. The power of God, by giving His very Holy Spirit, is a power that is received
 1. It is not achieved, but received
 2. It is power/strength, but not for the purpose of personal power, but to witness to Christ Jesus
 - a. In fact, it comes with the same ministry that Jesus had, and His came with suffering and a cross
 - b. Our ministry will be the same – but do not fear, for the Spirit of God's life is given to you.
 3. It is consistent with holiness/godliness
 - a. As Jesus walked, so shall we, for we have His Spirit within us
 - b. "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Rom. 14:17)
 - ii. "Coming upon you" (aorist ptc.)

1. Word used exclusively by Luke to indicate an overpowering, a power which produces something of its own will and purpose
 - a. Luke 1:35 – the Holy Spirit overpowering Mary to conceive Jesus
 - b. Luke 11:22 – parable of the strong man, overpowering and taking stuff
 - c. Luke 21:26 – heavens shaken and people fearing b/c of doom
 - d. Acts 8:24 – Simon Magician pleads for Peter’s curse not to “overtake” him
 - e. Acts 13:40 – Beware unless the prophets’ words ‘come upon’ you
 - f. Acts 14:19 – Jews ‘came upon’ the Lystrans and persuaded them to stone Paul
 - iii. The baptism of the Holy Spirit, then, is described as powerful and His purposes inevitable
 1. This sovereign God who lays out all of history also pours out His power of inevitability upon those who belong to Christ Jesus
 2. This power of the Holy Spirit means that what God has “placed” you to do in His kingdom will be done
3. This Power from God Changes Your Identity: YOU ARE WITNESS OF JESUS CHRIST!!
- a. You will Be My witnesses
 - i. The power of God through the pouring out of His Holy Spirit is an *existential* power: the power to *be* something
 - ii. It is the power to be a witness
 1. It is not the power to witness
 2. It is the power which makes you fundamentally something different than you previously were: you ARE a witness
 - b. You will be His witnesses unlimited by geography, nationality, ethnicity, history, or society
 - i. This witness is moving - outwardly
 1. In Jerusalem
 2. In all of Judea
 3. In all of Samaria
 4. As far as the end of the earth
 - ii. By the end of the book of Acts the gospel is being proclaimed “unhindered” in Rome, the center of the powers of the known world at the time
 - c. This is not a command, or a battle plan, or a missiological system of discipleship – IT IS A PROMISE
 - i. What does this mean?
 - ii. God moves in power by His Spirit upon you, so go testify in full assurance that He is moving the mountains of the hearts of men to build a highway to the New Jerusalem where Christ is King and Humanity is the way we are supposed to be
 - iii. You belong to Christ Jesus and He has transformed you into what you are: a witness of His glory and beauty and worthiness

Russell Moore, pastor of Capitol Hill Baptist Church, in the light of the current presidential election:

“The most important lesson we should learn is that the church must stand against the way politics has become a religion, and religion has become politics. We can hear this idolatrous pull even in the apocalyptic language used by many in this election—as we have seen in every election in recent years—that this election is our “last chance.” And we can hear it in those who assume that the sort of global upending we see happening in the world—in Europe, in the Middle East, and now in the United States—mean a cataclysm before which we should panic.

Such talk is not worthy of a church that is already triumphant in heaven, and is marching on earth toward the ultimate victory of Jesus Christ. Will we face difficult days ahead? Yes. The religious liberty concerns will continue. The cultural decline we have warned against is now part of every ideological coalition in the country. But the question we must ask is who “we” are.

We are not, first, Republicans or Democrats, conservatives or progressives. We are not even, first of all, the United States of America. We are the church of the resurrected and triumphant Lord Jesus Christ. We have survived everything from the rage of Nero to that of Middle Eastern terrorist cells. We have, in fact, often done best when we are, what one historian calls, the “patient ferment” of a church alive with the gospel.”

The Spirit of God is working in us the kingdom life of Christ Jesus. To this end we strive. To this end we hope. To this end we will see victory, for He has given us His Spirit to empower us to testify to Him. To testify of His authority and reign, His vicarious atonement for our sins, His victory over death and disorder, by both our words and our deeds, how we speak to one another and o the world, and how we relate to one another and the world. We are the Church of Jesus Christ, able to lay down our power as our Master laid down His, knowing that He will raise us up again in the time which the Sovereign God has placed before time itself was laid down. Today, we die to ourselves that we might testify to the glory of Christ Jesus. Tomorrow, we will be raised up and taken up by the fullness of joy in His presence, in utter and eternal security. Christ holds you there. So die courageously and full of hope.