

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 46 - KINGDOM OF GOD]

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***We have been looking at the implications of the resurrection of Jesus.***

- ◆ Last time we talked about how the resurrection of Jesus to immortality has heralded a new creation event.
- ◆ A new creature now exists in God's spiritual world, which has not existed before.
- ◆ For the first time a human truly in God's image exists, one who through His sinless life, His death on the cross and His resurrection on the third day has opened the way for mortals to join God in eternity.
- ◆ Jesus the Creator, and our mediator, has restored access to the source of true life so that eternal life is now available to all those who seek it.
- ◆ Jesus through His incarnation and the ordeal of the atonement has forged a new humanity out of the old.
- ◆ Our inclusion in the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis then for the creation of the "new humanity" which will live on into eternity.

***But we saw Jesus' resurrection has implications far beyond that of humanity. It has implications for the whole of the fallen creation.***

- ◆ In His ministry prior to the cross, Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God breaking into human affairs.
- ◆ ***Mark 1:14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"***
- ◆ Jesus "came near" to us with His incarnation as the anointed King of the kingdom of God. But at this point in His ministry, much more needed to be accomplished before the kingdom could be established.
- ◆ However, after performing His saving work through His life, death and resurrection, the kingdom of God was established on earth and could be expanded to include all those who believe in the King, Jesus.
- ◆ ***Mark 9:1-4 And he said to them, "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power. 2 After six days Jesus took Peter, James and John with him and led them up a high mountain, where they were all alone. There he was transfigured before them. 3 His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. 4 And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus.***
- ◆ Normally in this section, the reference to the kingdom of God coming in power is interpreted as referring to the three disciples, Peter, James and John witnessing the transfiguration of Jesus meeting with Elijah and Moses.
- ◆ And that is fine as far as it goes. But Jesus was referring to an event much more significant than just His transfiguration before His disciples.
- ◆ In reality, He was referring to the consequence of what His saving work would achieve for the whole of the fallen creation.
- ◆ His resurrection from the dead on the third day signified the beginning of the new creation, the new creation that included the possibility of humanity joining Jesus in immortality to share and commune in the life and love of God.
- ◆ ***2 Corinthians 5:17-18 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ.***
- ◆ The resurrection of Jesus, crossing the gulf between mortality and immortality through the power of God also signified the start of Christ's rule over the kingdoms of this world.
- ◆ Satan had promised Jesus dominion over the kingdoms of the world at the temptation if Jesus would bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:8-10).
- ◆ Now with the defeat of sin, Satan and death, this was the inauguration of the kingdom of God on earth with Jesus as its newly coronated King.
- ◆ As prophesied in the book of Daniel, this kingdom would grow until it crushed all opposing powers (Daniel 2:31-35).
- ◆ This was the beginning of the end for kingdoms built on the power of ruthless force the culmination of which is recorded in the book of Revelation.
- ◆ Meanwhile the present age will continue in the same old way, but the whole framework of history has been set on a whole new path as Christ has embedded Himself in the very heart of it all.
- ◆ What was previously destined for decay, death and oblivion, has now been set on a whole new trajectory thanks to the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.

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- ◆ Here now stands a man who has defied death and corruption and is no longer subject to the natural laws of this world.
- ◆ In addition, He now has the power to draw all humanity into the divine dimension where God lives when He declares, ***"I am the resurrection and the life."*** (John 11:25).

***Jesus' resurrection is the beginning of the end for earthly chronos time as the old decaying world is being replaced by the new creation, the kingdom of God.***

- ◆ Both times continue to exist for the time being, but inexorably, the kingdom of God will advance and the old creation will slowly fall away into oblivion.

***Proof that the kingdom of God has arrived is characterised by a number of significant points.***

- ◆ This new age is under the Lordship of the risen One who claims, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 21:6).
- ◆ Now that those forces that have to this point defied God's intentions, i.e., our fallen human nature, sin, the devil and death, have been defeated, our destiny is in the capable hands of Jesus Christ.
- ◆ The "Alpha" or "beginning" Jesus is referring to in this verse is the start of the new age, the kingdom of God inaugurated with His resurrection from the dead.
- ◆ The "Omega" or "end" is a reference to the end of this age when those who have accepted Christ as their Savior are led through the gates of the New Jerusalem to be forever with their God.
- ◆ This new kingdom is characterized by grace rather than law (Romans 6:14).
- ◆ Through His death on the cross, Jesus had substituted Himself as the focal point of God's final judgment on the world and ended the conflict between God and humanity.
- ◆ Mankind no longer lives under the judgment of God's law as Jesus' saving work has cancelled the written code which judges us guilty and now lives under the forgiving power of the New Covenant's blessing of grace (Colossians 2:13-15).
- ◆ This new age is characterized by the spiritual healing work of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:16-18).
- ◆ Whereas the old age was dominated by evil spiritual forces intent on separating mankind from His Creator, this new age is characterized by God's Holy Spirit drawing humanity back into relationship with His Creator.
- ◆ We will talk more of this later.
- ◆ This new age is one of inclusion where all, both Jews and Gentiles are invited to share in the kingdom (Acts 2:17, Ephesians 2:14-15).
- ◆ The dividing wall of hostility between competing parties has been broken down and now all are one in Christ Jesus. This is the new humanity or the citizens of the kingdom of God (Galatians 3:28).
- ◆ This is the age of the "firstfruits" or the church age (Matthew 16:18, Ephesians 2:19-22).
- ◆ The world needs to hear the good news about the God who loves them so much He was willing to die for them.
- ◆ In addition, a people, the church (firstfruits) needs to be prepared to assist with the great harvest of souls (second-fruits) at the end of the age.
- ◆ So when Jesus said in Mark 9:1, ***"Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see that the kingdom of God has come with power"***, He was referring to much more than His transfiguration before His disciples.
- ◆ He was speaking about the dawning of the new age, the age of the kingdom of God, the age of grace, the age of the healing work of the Holy Spirit, and the formation of the early church.
- ◆ The whole course of humanity was set on a whole new trajectory when the first human, Jesus, was raised from the dead.
- ◆ Don't make the mistake of minimizing the full implication of what occurred on that resurrection morning. It was much more than Jesus being brought back to life, joyful event though that was.
- ◆ It was the culmination of all that Jesus had set out to do through the incarnation and the atonement.
- ◆ All He had accomplished would have been in vain if not for His resurrection.
- ◆ The resurrection proved God not only had the power to grant humans immortality, but it was His stamp of approval on all Jesus had done to make this transition possible.
- ◆ In addition, it was the arrival of the new age, the kingdom of God under the loving rule of the rightful King and Savior of the world, Jesus Christ.

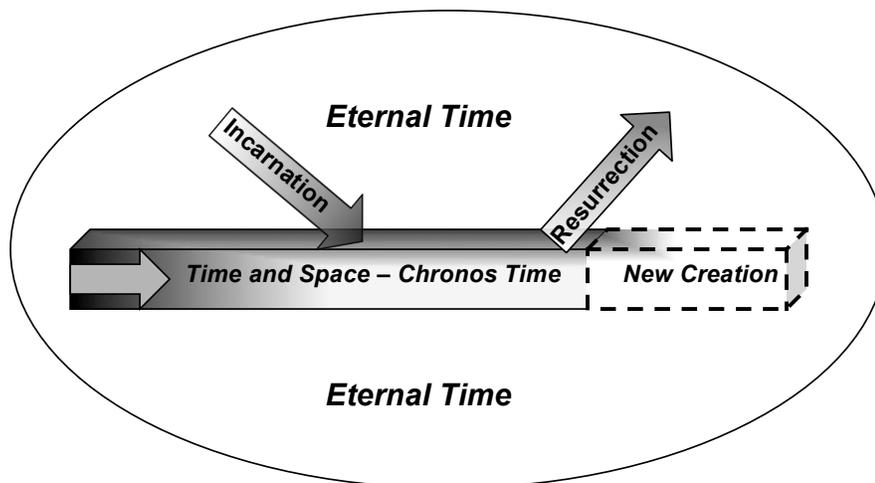
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***This new creation period between Jesus' resurrection and His second coming is also the prophesied millennial age or the "1000 year" reign of Christ.***

- ◆ Now you might ask, "Wait a minute, you're saying this present evil world with all its troubles and woes is the prophesied millennium?"
- ◆ Bear with me for a moment while we pursue this a little further.
- ◆ There are three major theories regarding the millennium: Pre-millennialism, Post-millennialism, and A-millennialism.
- ◆ The major difference between these teachings is the timing of Christ's second coming.
- ◆ **Pre-millennialism**, teaches that Christ will return to earth *prior to* a literal 1000-year earthly reign.
- ◆ The greatest development and spread of pre-millennialism thinking came in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries with the rise of U.S. fundamentalism and dispensationalism.
- ◆ It was also during this period that concepts like the rapture of God's people prior to the tribulation would occur.
- ◆ In that sense it is a relatively recent theory.
- ◆ **Post-millennialism**, states that Christ's return will *follow* a 1000-year golden age ushered in by the church.
- ◆ The world will have been Christianized and mankind will be living in peace and prosperity.
- ◆ Christ will return after this has happened, hence the term "post" millennialism.
- ◆ **A-millennialism**, is the view which states that Christ is *presently* reigning on earth through the church, and that the "1000 years" of Revelation 20:1-6 is a metaphorical reference to the present church age which will culminate in Christ's visible second coming.

***What both the "pre" and the "post" millennial positions fail to understand is the profound impact Jesus' resurrection had on the old creation of time and space.***

- ◆ As we have just read the resurrection of Jesus to immortality wasn't just about a man moving from mortality to immortality, but the introduction of the new creation of the kingdom of God. (See figure below).



- ◆ To regard what occurred from the perspective of old time and space is to miss the spiritual implications of this momentous event.
- ◆ To see what is really happening, we need to look past our limited earthly perspective and look at things from God's perspective.
- ◆ As we have seen, we have two times running in parallel; the new creation of the kingdom of God is steadily advancing, while chronos time is falling away.
- ◆ To view the 1000-year earthly reign of Christ as returning to the old decaying structure of chronos time fails to recognize what transpired when Jesus rose from the dead.

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- ◆ What would be the point of going back to the old decaying structure of chronos time after Christ has gone to great lengths to defeat it and has instituted the age of the new creation?
  - ◆ As we have seen, the course of humanity has been set on a whole new trajectory as a result of Jesus life, death and resurrection.
  - ◆ It is the age of the new creation; there is no going back to the old, decaying structure of the fallen creation.
  - ◆ Notice how Jesus tried to explain this concept of the kingdom of God to the Pharisees.
  - ◆ **Luke 17:19-21** *Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed.*
  - ◆ Viewed from the purely physical perspective of chronos time, it can't be observed, because it is part of the new spiritual dimension.
  - ◆ **V.21** *nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst."*
  - ◆ The kingdom of God revolves around the one standing in their midst, and the one who has made the new creation possible, Jesus Himself.
  - ◆ Viewed purely from an earthly perspective of time and space it may appear as though the kingdom has not yet arrived, but viewed spiritually, it came into being at Jesus' victory over sin and death.
  - ◆ In the same way we believe through faith that the risen Lord now sits out of sight at the Father's right hand, so it is with the kingdom of God.
  - ◆ Just because it is not always physically discerned, doesn't mean it is not operating behind the scenes of secular history.
  - ◆ However, at the apocalypse, the revelation, all will be revealed, hence the title of the book named for this event.
  - ◆ Jesus will be unveiled as the God who entered our world as the Lamb of God in order to save the world and establish the kingdom of God.
  - ◆ At this present time, this knowledge can only be discerned spiritually through faith by the people of the new creation (1 Corinthians 2:10-14).
  - ◆ But at His second coming, a now visible Jesus along with His saving work will be revealed for all to see. This is when the visible and the invisible merge as one in the new heavens and the new earth.
  - ◆ Until that time, the kingdom remains veiled behind chronos time.
  - ◆ But make no mistake; there is no going back to the old decaying structures of this present evil world.
  - ◆ Jesus will return visibly as King of Kings and Lord of Lords in all the glory of the kingdom of God revealing to all what He has done to accomplish the salvation of humanity.
- If we want to understand the workings of the kingdom of God we need to put on our "kingdom glasses" and look at it from the perspective of Jesus Christ.***
- ◆ A-millennialism does this. It holds that Christ's reign during the millennium is spiritual in nature and is operating behind the scenes as part of the church age.
  - ◆ At the end of the church age, Christ will return in final judgment and establish a permanent reign, not in the old creation of time and space but in the new spiritual dimension of the new heavens and new earth.