

PREFACE

There are times in the study and teaching of God's word when Scripture reveals itself in relatively simple, obvious, easily interpreted ways. We digest it, then move on. Then there are times when the revelation is less clear at first, but reveals itself, bit by bit, as the passage is excavated down to the bare metal. Very often this excavation reveals not just facts, and understanding, but wondrous truth. Just such a passage is before us now.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:23-26.

v24

then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

As I stated in our last session, the last two clauses of v24 are in reverse order; we find that interpretation reflected in the NIV:

Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power.

Thus, whatever Paul means by "the end" (and it is not clear) is somewhat described, but also follows the actions in these two clauses. First Christ will "destroy (abolish) all dominion (rule) and all authority and power," then He will "hand over (deliver) the kingdom to God the Father." Here's how Eugene Peterson, in his paraphrase *The Message*, interprets this verse:

the grand consummation when, after crushing the opposition, he hands over his kingdom to God the Father.

As stated before, Paul is not concerned with timelines here; he is describing events that are indeed part of the Eschaton, but is not bothering to fit them into their respective place with *other* events. So we will try not to do that either. Even though v23 seems to clearly speak of the resurrection that takes place at the Rapture, v24 apparently speaks of a transitional point later in the Eschaton.

when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.

There is general agreement that by "all rule and all authority and power" the apostle refers to "all the malignant powers" (Garland). That is, the demonic influence on the earth in all its various forms. The Greek word—here, *katargese*, from the root *katargeo*—is elusive in translation. It can refer to absolute destruction or just the rendering of something or someone inoperative, inactive, useless. There are moments in the Eschaton when evil is rendered inoperative, such as when Satan is "jailed" in the abyss during the Millennium. But then, later, after he has been released, he is thrown into the lake of fire, to suffer an eternity of living death.

So, again, let's not waste our time trying to pinpoint this on the timeline, but rather conclude, as I did last week, that Christ cannot hand over the kingdom to the Father until He (Christ) has dethroned or rendered inoperative or abolished "all rule and all authority and power," for nothing impure can be permitted in the Father's presence. In any case, since this cleansing is required first, it seems to suggest that "the kingdom" at this point does *not* speak exclusively of the church immediately after the Rapture—a beautiful picture, but it does not quite fit—but of something more cosmic, more "all in all." For the church is lifted out from a world still rife with demonic influence—indeed, one that will soon be under the thumb of Satan's lapdog, the Antichrist. Clearly at that point Christ has neither rendered inoperative or destroyed all the malignant powers.

when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father,

That leaves us with the first, but second in sequence, clause, "when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father." Seeking an answer to an apparent contradiction, I was inexorably pulled into the wonder lying beneath the surface of v24. Verse 24 states that Christ will hand "over the kingdom to the God and Father." My immediate response to that was the recollection that Jesus Himself stated that God the Father had given that to *Him*.

Read Matthew 11:27.

Read John 5:21-22, 25-27.

In these two passages, Jesus speaks of receiving from the Father

- all judgment; the authority to execute judgment;
- self-existent life;
- the power to reveal the truth about the Father;
- and beyond that, the all-encompassing "all things."

But can we include in this "the kingdom"? D. A. Carson gives good evidence that the concept of the, or God's, kingdom, or "the kingdom of heaven" is dynamic and fluid. For example, Jesus says in Matthew 16:28, "Truly I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who will not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in **His kingdom**." "See the Son of Man coming in His kingdom"—clearly a reference to the Rapture, Christ's return for His church. But later, in Matthew 26:29, Jesus says to His disciples, "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom." Carson draws the obvious conclusion: "The kingdom of heaven is simultaneously the kingdom of the Father and the kingdom of the Son of Man."

I find the most dramatic contrast to v24—"when He hands over the kingdom to the God and Father"—in the prophecy of Daniel.

Read Daniel 7:13-14.

There is only one everlasting, eternal kingdom: *David's* kingdom. When King David planned to build a "house" for the Lord, the Lord God through the prophet Nathan declared that it would not be David, but his son Solomon who would build the temple. In a prophecy that spoke of *both* Solomon and the future Messiah, God told David, "When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

This is the kingdom over which the Son of Man will rule. In a sense He already does; but just as death is now conquered in principle but not yet absolutely, Christ's kingdom today consists only of those who follow Him in a fallen world ruled by Satan; but there will come a day when before Him "every knee will bow" to His sovereign rule (Philippians 2:10). This is the eternal kingdom the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he foretold the *birth* of the Messiah.

Read Isaiah 9:6-7.

We have been speaking of the Son of Man and God the Father, but did you hear in that passage how they are combined in v6? "A child will be born...a son given..." That is, the Messiah will be born on earth (and His favorite title for Himself will be "Son of Man"). But then it goes on to say that He will be called "Mighty God, Eternal Father"! See how Christ and Father God are blended together. Hold that thought. We will return to it.

However, in His answer to Pilate's question—"Are You the King of the Jews?"—Jesus broadened the scope of His kingdom, making it more cosmic in nature.

Read John 18:36-37.

So then, what are we to do with this? What are we to do with all these passages that speak of a "kingdom" that God the Father gives to Christ, but also Christ gives to the Father? What are we to make of passages that seem to interchange Father and Son? What is the picture presented to us in v24? Jesus Himself gives us one—if not *the* critical component to the answer to our questions. [Please turn to John 10:25](#). One day at the temple Jesus was verbally accosted by a group of Jews demanding that He, once and for all, answer their question plainly. Quit spiritualizing His response, quit cloaking it in euphemisms and parables; answer plainly: *Are You the Christ?*

Read John 10:25-29.

Did you hear that? Jesus just said, "...and no one will snatch them out of My hand," followed by "...and no one is able to snatch them out of the *Father's* hand." Well, which is it? Are we in Christ's hand or the Father's hand? The answer: Yes. The Father gave Christ His sheep, His followers, and they are simultaneously in His hand and the Father's hand. There is no difference between the two—which is confirmed by Jesus' declarative statement in v30: "I and the Father are one."

The picture I have in my mind is a blending of v24 and the Daniel prophecy. Christ, the Son of Man, approaches the Father's throne carrying in His arms "the kingdom." He ceremonially places it into the Father's hands, declaring, *It is done. It is finished.* The Father then hands the kingdom back to the Son (paraphrasing Daniel 7:14), *To You I have given dominion, glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations and men of every language would serve You. Your dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and Your kingdom is one which will not be destroyed. Now go down and rule! Be King over all.*

There is the wonder of it all. There is the glorious evidence for the unity of the Godhead. The three manifestations—Father, Son, Spirit—may work in different areas; they may have different "job descriptions." But they remain One. Jesus said to another group of antagonistic Jews, "...the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner... I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me." ([John 5:19, 30](#))

Because the Father loves the Son, He has placed Him in charge of judging and ruling the kingdom. The Father has made Christ king over all that is. But that is not an earthly picture of a king who answers to no one—that's how we might think of it: there's no one above a king, a king can do anything he pleases—but this is a *heavenly* picture of a Father working *through* His Son, and the Son behaving precisely as does His Father.

Gordon Fee: The question of whether the passage is basically christo- or theocentric is perhaps a red herring. It is both. That is, God is the ultimate source of all things; but He works out His purposes in history through Christ. Hence both Christ and God can alternatively function as the subject of most of the verbs in this paragraph.

The apostle clarifies the relationship of the two, as regards the Lord's rule over the kingdom, in v28: "When all things are subjected to Him [[Christ](#)], then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One [[God the Father](#)] who subjected all things to Him [[Christ](#)], so that God may be all in all."

I find helpful the words of the late Matthew Poole (1624-1679), with which we will close.

Poole: When he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father: Christ shall then deliver up those keys of life, and hell, and death to his Father, yet shall not Christ's kingdom cease (for the prophet saith, Isaiah 9:7, that of it *there shall be no end*): Christ's essential kingdom, which is his dominion, which he hath and exerciseth over all created beings, together with his Father, and the Holy Spirit, (all being but one Divine essence), that shall hold and abide for ever; but his mediatory kingdom, by which he ruleth over his church in the midst of his enemies, that shall cease, and be delivered up unto the Father. So that Christ's delivering up the kingdom to his Father, proveth no inferiority of Christ to his Father, more than his Father's committing that mediatory kingdom to him can prove his Father's not reigning, or inferiority to him, which it certainly doth not. It signifieth only the ceasing of that dispensation, or Christ's exercise of his mediatory kingdom on earth, in the rule and government of the church, and subduing his and his people's enemies.

We will continue this in our next session.