

- e. As Jesus' Parousia will bring the fullness of resurrection, so it will usher in the fullness of the kingdom of God: "*Then the end comes, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father*" (15:24a). By the "end," Paul was referring to the end of the present age, but in a way that looks forward rather than backward. That is, his language highlights the end of the age as a transition point: It brings to a close the present order of things, not as a cessation, but a metamorphosis. As a chrysalis must undergo a kind of death in order to bring forth the consummate life that is the butterfly, so the present age must "die" in order for the creation to attain its consummate perfection and glory alongside the fully revealed glory of the children of God (Romans 8:18-22). The "end" is thus not the twilight of a closing night for the creation, but the dawn of its eternal day.

Perhaps most notable about Paul's description of this creational metamorphosis into the consummate kingdom is that he framed it in terms of God's climactic and complete triumph of over all enemies – enemies of Himself and therefore enemies of His kingdom and its citizens (15:24b-26). By speaking in this way, Paul was careful to follow the scriptural pattern which presents the eschatological kingdom as the outcome of the *Day of the Lord* which Yahweh promised through His prophets. This "day" was to be a theophany like no other, a time when Yahweh Himself would arise and act in order to accomplish a two-fold mission:

- 1) His first mission was to conquer and destroy all of the enemies of His kingdom and its inhabitants – the enemies that, through guile or tyranny, led His people away and enslaved them, thereby defiling and desolating His kingdom. What is most notable is that, in every instance involving this theme, the sons of the kingdom were themselves primary enemies to be dealt with: It was *Israel's* waywardness and adultery which provoked judgment, exile and desolation; other nations and forces were merely co-conspirators with them against the Lord (cf. Joel 1:15-2:17; Amos 5:1-27, 7:7-8:10; Zephaniah 1:1-13; cf. Jeremiah 1-3; Ezekiel 4-7, 12, 23-24; etc.).
- 2) The second mission is the ultimate goal for the Day of Yahweh, which is ending all subjugation and captivity and restoring His kingdom and people to Himself. God revealed to His prophets that His purpose for His coming theophany was restorative, not destructive. True, He would arise and destroy His enemies – *most importantly, the enmity in the hearts of His image-sons*, but in order to liberate and regather the exiled captives and restore the "desolate heritages" (cf. Isaiah 45:1-19; Ezekiel 36:16-38; Joel 1-3; Amos 9:1-15; Obadiah 1-21; Zephaniah 1-3; Zechariah 2:1-13; etc.).

The Day of Yahweh was the divine pledge of theophany for the purpose of retribution unto restoration, and this theme saw various prototypical fulfillments during the Old Testament salvation history. The most important of those involved the exile, captivity, and restoration of Judah (cf. Isaiah 13, 44:24-28). For the Day of Yahweh was grounded in His commitment to establish the kingdom promised to David, and Judah was the manifestation of David's kingdom at that time.

The Lord did indeed visit His unfaithful people and the covenant kingdom with the punishment of exile and desolation, only to soon liberate and restore them. *But that divine act didn't fulfill the prophetic promise of the Day of the Lord*; it simply gave tangible expression to it, demonstrating that God had the power and will to accomplish what He had pledged. The “day” the prophets spoke of would come when Yahweh arose to judge His enemies and recover, not a Judean remnant, but the whole created order (Isaiah 40-66). The Day of the Lord would see the liberation and restoration of the exiled and enslaved creation, just as the Lord promised in the very beginning with His oath in Eden. Then the promise to David would be realized; then the kingdom of God would be established forever.

*“The coming kingdom of God will be inaugurated by the great day of the Lord, the day of judgment for the apostate part of Israel, as well as for the nations in general, and at the same time, however, by the day of deliverance and salvation for the oppressed people of the Lord.”* (Ridderbos, The Coming of the Kingdom)

Given its emphasis on God rising up to destroy His enemies in order to liberate and restore His people and their inhabitation, it's not surprising that the prophet Isaiah treated the Day of the Lord as a *second Exodus* (cf. 51:1-11 with 35:1-10, 63:7-17). This imagery didn't originate with Isaiah, but had its origin in Moses' promise to the generation who experienced the first Exodus (Deuteronomy 30).

But if the Day of the Lord was prophesied as the cataclysmic theophany through which Yahweh would establish His kingdom, and if the kingdom conforms to the scheme of “already but not yet,” *it would seem that this same scheme ought to apply to the Day itself*. In fact, this is exactly the case. Though many Christians reserve the Day of Yahweh for the end of the age and Jesus' Parousia, the New Testament indicates that this Day had its essential fulfillment in Jesus' first coming (which accomplished the “end times” judgment and restoration which the prophets attributed to the Day of Yahweh). So, for instance, the prophets described the Day of the Lord as a cosmic cataclysm, marked by signs in the heavens and on the earth (darkness, earthquake, etc.), and such phenomena accompanied Jesus' crucifixion. Moreover, the cross culminated Yahweh's triumph over the true enemies of spiritual powers and death itself (cf. 15:24; Colossians 2:13-15; Revelation 12:1-11). So also His defeat of His enemies was followed by liberation and renewal, first in the Last Adam Himself and then in other men (cf. Luke 1:67-79, 4:14-21; John 8:31ff; Romans 8:1-2; Galatians 5:1).

By defeating the enemies that had taken Adam's race (and the creation) captive, Jesus secured their release and regathering to His Father (cf. Isaiah 11:1-12, 49:1-13 with Matthew 11:27-30; John 12:31-32). And as the first Exodus had its goal in the Abrahamic kingdom (cf. Genesis 15:12-21 with Exodus 6:1-8, 15:1-18, 19:1-6), so it was with the second Exodus: Jesus' triumph culminated in His exaltation to the right hand of God and installation as King over Yahweh's everlasting kingdom – the kingdom of the new creation (cf. Psalm 2, 110; Daniel 2:1-44, 7:1-27 with Acts 2:22-36; Ephesians 1:18-23; Hebrews 1:1-3).

At the same time, the Day of the Lord has its consummation in Jesus' Parousia and the resurrection, final judgment, and liberation and renewal of the creation in the new heavens and new earth. Yahweh established His everlasting kingdom of the new creation through His triumphal coming in His Son, and the kingdom will attain its fullness through the Son's glorious Parousia and His destruction of the final enemy of death and restoration of the material creation.

And so, by describing Jesus' coming and the "end" in this way, Paul made it clear that the kingdom he was referring to is the same kingdom the prophets promised. *His description corresponds to the prophetic depiction of the eschatological kingdom, but it also transcends it.* This is not at all surprising given the Old Testament's shadowy treatment of the kingdom. There was a mystery to the kingdom and its coming, so that its exact nature, form and outworking could not be discerned until they were realized and interpreted in Jesus Christ. Only with the Christ event could it be seen that all things related to the kingdom have their fulfillment, substance, and meaning in Him.

The kingdom of God is the kingdom of new creation, and therefore it is grounded in the reality of resurrection. But this means that the kingdom is bound up in Jesus Himself, for He is the essence and beginning of new creation as the Living One, first fruits and Last Adam. The kingdom of God is the reality of new creation, but because it is all embracing, *it is a kingdom which must bring all things into subjection to itself.* For God's kingdom to be the kingdom He purposed – and which He disclosed and promised in the salvation history recorded in the Scriptures, *it can have no adversaries, principle of contradiction or power of opposition arrayed against it or standing in antithesis to it.*

- The kingdom of new creation in Jesus must extend to the whole creation or it is not the kingdom of God promised in the Scriptures and He is not the messianic Servant and Son of David (cf. Isaiah 11:1-16, 65:1-66-24; Daniel 2:27-45, 7:1-27; Hosea 2; Micah 4:1-4 and Zechariah 14:1-11 with Ephesians 1:9-10 and Revelation 21:1-8).
- The Scriptures insisted that the Davidic Son-King's conquest and subjugation would be absolute (cf. Psalm 2, 110), and indeed this must be the case if this King is to be a new Adam: *man in truth* – that is, the divine image-son to whom all created things are subjected by the Creator-Father (cf. Genesis 1:26-28 with Psalm 8).
- And because the kingdom over which this King rules as True Man is the all-encompassing kingdom of *life* in new creation, it follows that He must conquer the archenemy that is *death*. He conquered this destroying enemy first with respect to Himself as man, but ultimately on behalf of the subjugated creation (including mankind) so that it can be liberated from death's bonds and brought under the life-giving rule of the Living One.

Paul understood these things and regarded Jesus' final conquest of death as the last step in His fulfillment of the truth of man on behalf of mankind and the created order. This is evident from his reference to Psalm 8: "*He has put all things in subjection under His feet*" (15:26-27a).

- The glory and majesty of man consist in the fact that man is image-son: the creature created in the image and likeness of God to exercise His rule over the works of His hands. This means that all things must be in subjection to man's rule if they are to be in subjection to God's rule.
- And God's rule over His creation is contradicted and compromised by all creational enmity and alienation. The fall and curse subjected the creation to these, and thus all things must be reconciled to God if His rule is to be effected in the love, harmony and peace that are *shalom* and *shabbat*.
- And the greatest enemy and most formidable point of contradiction, alienation and opposition is death itself. Death contradicts and opposes God and His creation because He is the Living One; therefore, it must be abolished for the creation to realize its destiny as God's shalomic kingdom under the lordship of man, the image-son.

This is God's goal and it will be fulfilled. For Jesus is the *first fruits* of new creation, and therefore the substance and pledge of the fullness to come. And as life and new creation are true in Him, so is the kingdom of new creation. Even now in the Last Adam, man has been restored to his Creator-Father to assume his lordship over the creation. Even now True Man reigns ("He must *continue* to reign") with all enemies conquered and put in subjection under His feet – *even the archenemy of death* (cf. Acts 2:22-31; Ephesians 1:18-22; Revelation 1:9-18). That Jesus is True Man is evident in the fact that death has been destroyed in Him and with respect to Him; His resurrection from the dead affirmed Him to be the true Image-Son (cf. Psalm 2; Romans 1:1-4). But because He is the Last Adam, His conquest of death must extend to His progeny; and because He is *first fruits* from the dead, they must share in His resurrection life as truly and fully as He does (John 5:24, 8:51-52, 11:20-26, 14:16-20; cf. Romans 6:1-11; 1 Peter 1:3-4).

Jesus' conquest of death is absolute and constitutes *man's* conquest of death, but this victory is enjoyed by other men (and the creation) in two stages. Believers' resurrection exists as an "already-but-not-yet" reality, and so it is with their victory over death: Their spirits have overcome death and been liberated from it, but their bodies have not. *Thus Paul could affirm that the enemy of death remains unconquered even while insisting that all things have been put in subjection under Jesus' feet* (cf. Acts 2:22-36; cf. also Revelation 20:1-4 with vv. 13-14). Man has become man indeed in Him (Psalm 8:3-8), and mankind will attain to that true and full humanity in the day of His glorious appearing. In that day death – the last and greatest enemy of God and His creation – will be destroyed and the truth of man will be fully realized: "*You have put all things in subjection under his feet.*"

In addressing the challenge and responsibility the Church has to live out its “new creational” life and existence in the context of the present time/space “old creation” characterized by alienation, corruption, and death, Torrance says the following:

*“Although the Church is already one body with Christ through the Spirit, it is yet to become one body [in the fullness of physical resurrection] with him, but meantime in the world and history the church is a mixed body, with good and evil, true and false, wheat and tares in its midst. It is still characterized by sin and evil and partakes of the decay and corruption of the world of which it is a part, so that it is not yet what it shall be, and not yet wholly in itself what it is already in Christ. In this eschatological reserve and deep teleological ambiguity the church lives and works under judgment as well as grace, so that it must constantly put off ‘the image of the old man’ that passes away and put on ‘the image of the new man’ who is renewed in the likeness of Christ. The New Testament expresses this relation of union and distance between the church and Christ in terms of the twofold figure of the **bride** of Christ and the **body** of Christ – the church waits for the consummation of the mystery of its union with the saviour who, when he comes again, will present the church to himself, no longer spotted and wrinkled like an ageing lady but ‘without spot or wrinkle as a chaste virgin.’ This means that the church is constantly summoned to look beyond its historical [that is, present time/space, this-worldly] forms to the fullness and perfection that will be disclosed at the Parousia and must never identify the structures [forms, features, aspects, etc.] it acquires and must acquire in the nomistic forms of this-worldly historical existence [by ‘nomistic forms’ Torrance is referring to the forms and structures by which God orders and governs the present unrenewed creation in its present state of alienation, corruption and death preceding the new heavens and new earth] with the essential forms of its new being in Christ himself.” (T.F. Torrance, Atonement)*