

IX. - The Spirits Subjected to Him.

And he hath made all things subject unto his feet. EPHEZE 1:22b.

Precisely in Jesus' judgment seat lies the proof that His Kingship is in no way limited to the believers, but extends to all who are human. That the Christ will sit as Judge in the last judgment is a corollary of His royal power, and of His passing of sentence in the last judgment it is expressly stated that it will apply to all who are in the graves; as Jesus elsewhere declared that not only "the sheep" but also "the goats" will appear before His judgment seat. If Jesus' judicial power was only over the believers who are saved for eternal life, there would be almost no judgment, but only acquittal and pardon. It is only the appearance before Christ of those who have not accepted Him and have resisted His cause that makes His final judgment so supremely significant. It is therefore of no avail to the unbelieving world whether it keeps itself distant from Christ in this life, and pretends that the Christ is of no concern to it. It is not for them to decide whether or not to have dealings with the Christ. Christ himself determines this by virtue of the power he has received from the Father. And one day the hour will come when all those thousands and thousands who have refused to acknowledge Jesus' kingship here on earth will appear before him and will themselves be subject to the exercise of his judicial power for all eternity. The misunderstood and rejected or forgotten Savior will be Judge over them, and then also reveal Himself as their King.

This must be emphasized. The idea that the Christ was only the Head of the congregation and only King over His own has gained more and more ground in later years. There could only be talk of a spiritual sovereignty of Christ over the spirits. This spiritual power was only to be seen in those who came to faith in Christ. And it was precisely this that showed that this kingship could only consist in exerting influence to lead a holier life. Thus, by limiting the Kingship to the believers, the Kingship was actually destroyed and reduced to a nominal honorific. The untenability of this whole idea is immediately apparent if we counter this with the fact that the Christ already possesses, and will continue to exercise, the supreme judicial power over all unbelievers, and thus over all mankind. It is not enough to speak of spiritual influences, for their non-involvement with or rejection of Christ shows that these influences did not work, or did not penetrate. Yet the decision about the fate, the prosperity and well-being of all is placed in Christ's hands. The Christ must also know all non-believers, know them in their inner existence, and know all that they have done, be it good or bad, in order to be able to pass judgment on them one day. Thus, the Christ possesses a power which

extends to all men, which presupposes knowledge of all life, and which one day will dispose of them with divine majesty, without appeal. This high significance of Jesus' judicial power is usually paid far too little attention. The whole Christian Church, through all the ages, confessed and still confesses that Christ is "sitting at God's right hand, from where he will come to judge the living and the dead". Scripture always points out that this last judgment will not only decide the eternal destiny of the redeemed, but also the eternal destiny of the lost. It is therefore certain in everyone's estimation that the last judgment will also be upon the enemies of the Lord; and this final judgment would be inconceivable in Christ's kingdom, if not all souls and lives were laid bare before him. Not only His kingship as such, but most certainly also His kingship over the unbelievers follows from the fact that the Father has given the Son the task of keeping judgment. And so, it also appears in this way that the Kingship of the Christ concerns all mankind, not just some of them, but the whole human race. According to Psalm 2, the Christ "received the nations as his inheritance and the princes of the earth as his possession", and to all the princes of the earth the call goes out that they should give the Son the kiss of loyalty and homage "so that they may not perish on their way as soon as His wrath would be lighted even slightly. Even though the congregation of believers remains his mystical body and, as such, forms the center of his most intense influence, his honor does not cease to exist in the fact that Christ is the Head of the congregation. After the last judgment, yes, then all that is saved will be incorporated into that mystical Body, and the new humanity, after the waste of what is lost, will be one with that Body. But until that time comes, we must separate, and the Kingship of Christ, as far as this earth is concerned, will fall into two spheres: the sphere of the faithful, in which He already reigns spiritually, and the sphere of the as yet unregenerate world, which is "undermined with all things at His feet. This also contains the proof that Christ's rule does not in any way reside in the independent preservation of eternal life, but that he exercises his royal power over the whole of our human life in every sphere of human activity and development. It is not the case that for Christ the only question that mattered was whether this or that soul would be saved or lost, as if this question were separable from our entire life. Such a separation and segregation in our human life is utterly unthinkable. Our human life is a single cog in which all the cogs and teeth interlock. The life question for our soul cannot be isolated from the other questions that govern our lives. And that is why the Kingship of Jesus cannot and must not be understood as the rule over one single part of our life. Since everything in our personal life is connected, the reign of Jesus must also extend to all things in

that life. It must be a power that completely controls the development of our personal life and the human life in general.

This will become even more evident if we take into account, in addition to his sitting as Judge in the last judgment, his rule over the spirit world. The supremacy of Christ over the spiritual powers within the world of human children, like His judicial supremacy, is taught with full emphasis in the Apostolic Writ. Jesus himself had already expressed his power over the world of angels when he said that the Son of Man, appearing in judgment, would come as King "with all his holy angels. Without exception, the angels are thus presented as his bodyguard, as following him, and subject to his ordinance; a glory, the prelude to which had already been seen in Bethlehem, when the angels descended to greet the new-born King with their song of jubilation. Now that the angels are subject to Christ, it is only natural that the demons should also be subject to Christ. The demons were originally angels, but they were also demons who had fallen out of their state. Jesus went against the head of the demons in the desert, and he overcame him as well. On Golgotha Satan's power was broken for good, and with it the regular supremacy of Christ over the whole kingdom of demons came into effect. Before the Temptation and Calvary, Satan could still try to maintain a certain independence in the sphere of his own unholy action, but after Calvary this has ceased. He is still there, still working, and only in the end of days will his power be nullified once and for all, but his is now only a subordinate power, which he cannot exercise except under the supremacy of Christ. The kingdom of demons is also enclosed, when it is said that all things are subject to the feet of God's anointed King.

This most remarkable part of Jesus' royal supremacy is now emphasized by the Apostles. In Ephesians 1:20 ff. Paul testifies that the Father has set him "at his right hand in heaven, far above all government, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in the next, and has put all things at his feet. In Col. 1:15 ff. the apostle derives this royal power of the Christ, that "through him all things were created, that are in heaven and that are in earth, which are visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers, so that all things were created through him and unto him." And in 1 Cor. 15:24 ff. the apostle says that Christ "must reign as King, until he has realized his power, i.e., until he has put all enemies under his foot, by the undoing of all dominion, of all power and all strength." Two things are thus expressed. First, that in this spirit world not all spirits are alike, but that among the

spirits there are some that are vested with higher power. The higher power of some spirits in the spirit world is then indicated by titles and dignities derived from earthly life. There are those who have thrones, those who rule as rulers, those who are vested with dominion, and those who possess special power and strength. But however high some of these spirits may be placed thereby, all of their power and dominion are completely overshadowed by the majesty with which the Mediator is clothed. He alone is enthroned at God's right hand, high above all. This first of all, and then secondly, that not only does the royal rule of the Christ far exceed the dignity and glory of all those high spirits, but now also that all these spirits, even the highest among them, do not stand beside Jesus, but are subject to his royal power, even at his feet. Of course, this implies that the holy spirits, the pure angels, and even the saintly angels among them will willingly and naturally bow before him; But also that the evil spirits, the demons in their demonic sphere, and among them especially the spirits clothed with high power, and especially their chief, Satan, oppose this supremacy of Christ, present themselves as enemies to him, are fought and subdued by him, and that in the end all their power and strength and dominion will be destroyed. Last of all Death. "The last enemy to be nullified is Death."

That in Ephesians 1:20 ff. earthly Kings and Superiors are not to be thought of, is evident to us from what the apostle Peter writes: "Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God, ascended into heaven, having the angels and powers and forces made him subject." Thus, it is not human rulers but angels that are meant here, and it is not acceptable to understand what follows of "powers and forces" as referring to anything other than the spirit world. The addition of 'forces and powers' confirms this. Among men there may still be "thrones, authorities, and lords"; But even if in later years one gets used to speaking of "teachers" instead of "teachers" in an impersonal sense, a "force" is not a human office, not a human dignity, not a human honorific, and only in the spirit world can there be an order that gives a separate place to "forces" as well as to governments and rulers. It should be noted that the Apostle Paul speaks of "power and might not only in this world but also in the next. In fact, it has been attempted to deduce from this addition that the Apostle was referring first and foremost to the kings and authorities of the earth, and only as an appendix did he add the rulers among the spirits. However, the context does not permit this interpretation, and the reason for this addition is quite different. The reference is to a Mediator, to the power exercised by this Mediator, seated at the right hand of the Fathers, from the world above upon this earth; a power that is

concentrated in his congregation. Well, from that spirit world, too, there is a constant action on this earth. From the fallen spirits as well as from the spirits that have remained holy. The spirit world is therefore referred to here not in the manner in which it exists and operates in the unseen worlds, but primarily in so far as it acts on earth and on the world of the children of man. It is only in this way that it can be compared to the power of the Christ, for His power, too, is mentioned only insofar as it has an effect on our human life. We are now told, first, that the similar power and strength of spirits is of less value than the power of Christ, and, second, that all these activities that emanate from the spirit world to this earth no longer operate independently, but are subject to the royal rule of Christ.

The fact that many people do not feel this at first when they read the apostle's writings is due to their inaccurate conception of the relationship between heaven and earth. Many think of human life here on earth as being entirely self-contained, and, quite apart from that, they imagine the angelic world in the immense distance before the throne of God's majesty, from which, at most in the dim past, a single person has come down to earth to convey what God has ordered him to come and announce to us. Thus, our world and the spirit world are thought of as two entirely separate spheres that do not come into contact with one another except in very rare instances. This conception, however, is entirely foreign to the Holy Scriptures, and anyone familiar with the Scriptures will admit this, especially in view of the fallen spirit world. There is no question that the world of demons has no connection with our human life, and that in the course of the centuries an influence from that evil spirit world has reached our human world only once. Jesus himself, in the Lord's Prayer, puts on our lips, as a daily supplication for every Christian man, the plea: - Leave us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil; something that would make no sense if evil effects and influence from the devil world were not moving toward us day and night and trying to penetrate us. The apostle says that the devil is always going around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. During his wanderings on earth Jesus continually came into contact with the devils and into conflict, and so did his apostles after him. We know from our own experience what evil temptations from the devilish world come to us, and the deeper a child of God penetrates into the holy life, the more he discovers that the demonic world almost never leaves him alone, but is always active in his own heart, and in his family, and in his entire environment, with its evil, unholy powers.

It is strange that while the Christian community in general acknowledges, confesses and experiences this with regard to the evil angels, they are often silent

about the working and influence of the good angels. Especially since the Reformation the oblivion of the good angels has increased. This can be explained by the fact that the respect for the angels had gradually turned into the invocation of the angels in order to exert their influence on Christ, and the Reformers opposed this by stating that Christ is our only intercessor, and that we need neither the intercession of the saints nor the intercession of the angels as factors that intervene between us and Christ. This does not mean that the angels do not pray for us, nor that our saints do not remember us in their supplications, but only that we ourselves, as the redeemed and children of God, have access to the throne of grace, and that we therefore need no intermediary to assure us of Christ's love and intercession. For He "lives to pray for us." But as is generally the case, whichever way one turns, we are always prone to exaggeration, to falling into extremes. At first, we placed too much emphasis on the intervention and significance of angels, and thus saw in them a kind of intermediaries who stood between us and Christ. This was rejected in the days of the Reformation, but now it is time to move over to the other side and banish the angels from our religion.

There are those among us who no longer count with the angels at all; who still believe in their existence, but see little else in them than an ornament of glory for God's glory. And this is in open contradiction to what Scripture teaches us about the world of angels. The angel of the Lord surrounds him who keeps God's law with an invincible army. Thus, he is well preserved." And Jesus Himself testified: "Be careful not to despise any of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven." It is therefore preposterous to admit of a constant influence of the evil, fallen angels, and to deny all similar influence and effect of the good angels. The evil angels cannot exercise such influence, unless the exercise of such influence must lie in the nature and calling of the angels as such, and therefore it does not make sense to assert the influence with Satan and his demons, but to count it for nothing with the pure, holy angels. This point has been elaborated on earlier in our articles, which later appeared separately as the Tractate of the Angels of God, so that we will suffice here to refer to what was discussed then.

Our life on earth, whether in nature or in the world of man, is an independent and self-contained life. In nature we know how it is the sun, and partly the moon and many a star, which not only influence the situation of this earth, but control it. And it is no different in the spiritual world. In the spiritual sphere, too, there is action from the higher spirit world on our spiritual life. The real spiritual battle and

struggle is not waged here on earth but in the unseen worlds, and what can be seen on earth is only the result and after-effects thereof. That is why it would be utterly unthinkable for the Christ to rule as King in the spiritual realm of this world, if he did not also rule as King over the spirits of the unseen worlds, both good and bad. Jesus' reign in the world of demons and good angels is not something that comes with his kingship of this world. It is a kind of secondary honor, given to him by the Father to increase his glory. Inasmuch as the spirit world up there constitutes the spirit world on earth, it was absolutely necessary, in order for the Christ to reign here, that he should also be given dominion over the unseen spirit world. Without absolute power in the spirit world, he could not exercise his spiritual supremacy on earth. And so it is in logical connection that the Apostle Paul first says Christ has received power over the angels and demons, and then that as such he has been given to the Church as its Head. Throughout the city at night the light is burning, whether it be from gas or electricity, but whoever is to make this light burn must be the master of the place where the gas is burnt or the source of the electricity is developed. And so it is that Christ must be lord and master over all the forces and powers that make it possible for light to penetrate the spiritual world on earth, and for this reason, in order that he might be Head of the Spirits and King of mankind, he was given the power, supremacy and supreme authority over all the spiritual factors in the unseen world that work and exert an influence on this world from there.

Thus, he received power and dominion 1°. over the reborn humanity, 2°. over the not yet reborn humanity that resists him, and likewise 3°. over the world of demons and of holy spirits, - and only through the dominion over these three spheres can his eternal and glorious Kingship exist.