

The Saints Triumphant
November 18, 2010

Mark 13:24-27
730*-214-376/551-219

*CW-S – “Blessed Are They Which Are Called”

We Are – And We Will Be! – Saints Triumphant!

- I. It doesn't look that way right now in these last days.
- II. It will certainly be that way on the Last Day.

Dear Christian friends,

I love this day on the **church calendar** – the Saints Triumphant. Today's FOCUS is the culmination of **God's plans** for us. This is what Christmas – Good Friday – Easter – Pentecost – all lead to. This is the GOAL of our Christian faith and **hope**.

SEEING this is so fantastic and **comforting** – yet the wait can be so long and **wearying**. In an Advent hymn we sing, “Jesus, Your Church, WITH LONGING EYES, For Your expected coming wait, When will the promised light arise, and glory beam from heaven's gates?”

As we look at these verses draw the comfort of this day – “WE ARE – AND WE WILL BE! – SAINTS TRIUMPHANT!” 1)It doesn't look that way in these **last days**, but 2)it will certainly be that way on the **Last Day**.

I. It doesn't look that way right now in these last days.

Before we go any farther let's be clear on those words “**saints triumphant.**” For many people that word “**saint**” means either 1)a dead Christian (as in the “**sainted**” so-and-so) or 2)a really good – a **super-duper** – Christian like St. Paul or St. John. But do you see YOURSELF as a **saint** – a saint TRIUMPHANT?

The word saint simply means a “**holy person.**” Holy means without sin – perfect. To use the words of the psalmist a saint is one who “**has clean hands and a pure heart – whose walk is blameless – who does what is right.**” To be a saint is to MEASURE UP to **God's** standards. “**Be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy.**”

We're not saints because of the LIVES WE'VE LIVED but only because of the **life** JESUS lived for us and the **death** Jesus died to pay for all our sins. It's ALL BECAUSE of Jesus and only by trusting in Jesus that we are saints – **holy people**. It's only with our sins all **washed away** in Jesus' blood – only when by faith we're clothed with Jesus' own holy life that we MEASURE UP to **God's** standards and are acceptable in God's sight.

Trusting in Jesus we are SAINTS – TRIUMPHANT! We're the WINNERS! How can we **be the winners** when the game isn't over yet? We've all seen games where it SEEMED like the **victory was won** but AT THE LAST MINUTE – with the last play – the **other team** won. Our triumph as **God's saints** IS SURE because it's **all God's doing**. God has promised us the **victory** and God always keeps His promises.

Our victory is a FUTURE **triumph**. Right now we are living in “**the last days.**” We live in a world FALLEN under the **curse** of sin. We live in a world in open rebellion against God. As the end draws near it will ONLY GET WORSE. People will grow even more defiant against God.

Jesus mentions the “**distress in those days.**” Daniel in the OT reading spoke of “**a time of distress that has not happened from the first time that there was a nation until that time.**” In **these last days** it WILL LOOK **more and more** as if the devil is winning and **God's saints** are going down in defeat.

ADD to that ***“the distress”*** in our own personal lives – our pains and problems – sufferings and **sorrows** – that **day-after-day** struggle against the sinful nature. It seems like we LOST MORE battles than we win. We can try so hard to BREAK that **sinful habit** – to OVERCOME that **pet sin** – we can be so determined – **“this time I’M CHANGING** – I’m going to stop grumbling – I’m going to be thankful EVERY DAY – I’m going to rearrange my priorities SO GOD really does come first – so I actually take time every day for devotions and **every week** for church.” GOOD INTENTIONS – but how successful are you? HOW MUCH PROGRESS have you seen in your **Christian faith and living**? Or have you just become a sinner who’s **one year older**?

It’s SO EASY to get discouraged and disgusted **living in** these last days. The LAST THING we feel is **triumphant**. WHEN, Lord, are You coming? We’re TIRED, Lord. ***“Come quickly, Lord Jesus!”*** we sigh and pray. Yet the waiting GOES ON. Right now we are the Church MILITANT – the Church at war – the Church **under attack** on all sides. WHEN, Lord, will we be Your saints TRIUMPHANT – Your **people victorious**?

The only way to handle life in these last days is to KEEP OUR EYES on Jesus. Look again and again at what Jesus has all done for us. Listen again and again to what Jesus has all promised us. **Again** and again take Jesus up on His invitation, ***“Take eat, take drink – My body – My blood – given FOR YOU for the forgiveness of sins.”*** Recall Paul saying, ***“As often as you eat this bread and drink this cup you proclaim the Lord’s death UNTIL HE COMES.”*** We ARE – we WILL BE – SAINTS TRIUMPHANT. It doesn’t look that way right now, but...

II. It will certainly be that way on the Last Day.

Jesus takes us not just to the LAST DAY but we could say to the LAST SECOND of this world. We’ve seen the devastation and **destruction** that world wars – **atomic bombs** – earthquakes and **tsunamis**, etc., can cause. The pictures boggle the mind. Actually seeing and **living through** that, oh man! Yet all that together is NOTHING COMPARED to the **last second** of this world. As you hear Jesus describe it try picturing it in your mind. While we know this is coming it will still catch us all **by surprise** – like ***“a thief in the night.”*** This will all happen NOT OVER THE COURSE of several hours or days but ***“in a flash, the twinkling of an eye.”*** ***“But after that distress the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light. The stars will be falling from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”*** Peter put it this way, ***“The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare.”*** Isaiah wrote that ***“the sky will be rolled up like a scroll.”***

Do you see what will happen? That’s the COLLAPSE – the end – the ***“passing away”*** of this world as we know it. No wonder Jesus tells us to ***“store up treasures in heaven”*** and not here on earth! How the devil would love to **get us to think** THAT THIS that we see and touch **right now** is WHAT LIFE is all about. Don’t fall for that! Let this picture – this **promise of Jesus** – SET YOUR PRIORITIES! Oh that people would hold on to Jesus AS TIGHT AS they hold on to their money – their pride – their **sinful ways** and OWN IDEAS. When this universe and **all that’s in it** collapses and ***“passes away”*** WHAT will you be holding on to?

“Then you will see the Son of Man coming on clouds with great power and glory.” WHAT A DAY this will be! Our faith will turn to sight. All people of all time will see this. FOR UNBELIEVERS it will be so terrifying. They will see how wrong they were about Jesus. FOR US CHRISTIANS what a sight for **our sore eyes**! That baby in the manger – that man standing in the Jordan River being baptized by John the Baptist – ***“Jesus of Nazareth”*** mocked and dying on that cross – a dead body placed in a **borrowed** grave – the LAST TIME the unbelieving world saw Jesus was as “dead and buried”! – see Him then ***“coming on clouds with great power and glory.”*** See Him AND REJOICE!

“At that time He will send out His angels and gather His elect from the four winds, from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of the sky.” Jesus calls us ***“His elect.”*** God’s plans for us MADE ***“before the creation of the world”*** – plans carried out down through the ages – NOW AT ***“the end”*** of the world God’s plans reach their ***final goal***. Paul told the Roman Christians, ***“We know that all things work together for the good of those who love God, for those who are called according to His purpose, because those God foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called. Those He called, He also justified. And those He justified, He also glorified.”***

“His elect” teaches once again that our salvation is ALL GOD’S DOING and all by God’s GRACE ALONE. We’re not better than anybody else. God is not so lucky to ***have us*** as His children. GRACE – totally undeserved love - is the ONLY EXPLANATION for why God chose us to be saved – why God sent His Son to be our Savior. That we are God’s ***“elect”*** – that we are and will be SAINTS TRIUMPHANT – that’s all grace and ONLY grace.

Now see it ALL FULFILLED! ***See fulfilled what Paul wrote*** in that ***precious epistle*** reading. ***See fulfilled*** THE TRIUMPH of God’s saints! See God’s elect ***“gathered from the farthest end of the earth to the farthest end of the sky.”*** Not a single one will be LOST or MISSING. See fulfilled that ***“we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.”***

Jesus shows us here THE END of the world ***as we know*** it. Listen now to what God has PROMISED us – see the triumph that ***awaits*** us on that day. God showed it to John in Revelation 21. ***“Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. And the sea no longer existed. I saw the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And from the throne I heard a loud voice that said, ‘Look! God’s dwelling is with people. He will dwell with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them, and He will be their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain, because the former things have passed away.’ The One who was seated on the throne said to me, ‘Look, I am making everything new!’ He also said, ‘Write, for these words are trustworthy and true.”***

“And so we will be with the Lord forever,” Paul wrote in the epistle reading. We are – and we will be! – SAINTS TRIUMPHANT! Amen.

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