

GOD STILL REIGNS

"And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Revelation 19:6.

God was before all things. The Bible tells us that "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). In Hebrews 1:10 we read, "And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning has laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands." Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God" (Psalm 90:2).

God spoke, and the worlds were framed. He threw planets into space, hung the sun, moon and stars in their respective places, piled up the mountains, rolled out the plains, sunk the oceans in coral beds, set the lakes like huge crystals among the green velvet pockets of the hills, planted the earth in trees, carpeted it in grasses, overarched it with canopies, wrapped in smiles of sunshine, kissed it with dewdrops, gladdened it with sunrise glories, splendedored it with sunsets, and tapestried it with rainbows. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17.)

Not only was God before all things, but we have many irrefutable evidences of God's presence in the world. He is not an absentee God detached from the lives which people are living here on earth. The present world is the workshop of the Almighty God. It is full of noise, confusion, and the clamors of those who do not hold God in awe and reverence. It is full of the intellectual conceit of men who are not aware of the rattle of the dry bones of their conceit. The ground is littered with the splinters of fallen greatness -- frustrated ambitions, broken health, and blighted hopes. This world has in it many suffering saints and flourishing sinners.

There is a divine plan of government, even though it is too vast for us to comprehend, and its methods are too intricate for us to explain. Even though we are often staggered by what this divine government ordains or permits, nothing can ever make us doubt the power of God's guiding hand in history. In this connection Cromwell reminded us that, "All histories are but God manifesting himself, shaking down and trampling under foot whatsoever he hath not planted."

God is everywhere in the world. Our eyes may be holden that we cannot see Him. If so, the fault is in our eyes and not in His presence. We cannot get away from His presence. When Paul preached to the Athenians he said: "That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:27-28). God is stamped on everything in nature. There is purpose, mind and design in it → yea, the presence and activity of God. God is manifest in the glory of the rising sun, in the blowing of the winds, and in the light of the setting sun. Through all the processes of nature the divine plan is being wrought out.

God is not a prisoner in the universe which He made, sitting when and where the universe says sit, standing when and where the universe says stand. God did not create the universe, make all things beautiful in their season, and set His spirit in man, and then turn His back and vanish into silence and oblivion. This world is not a piece of clockwork finished once and for all and set in motion by an almighty mechanic. God is the immediate and active cause

of all the operations of nature. The forces of nature are not forces which He has merely set in operation, but they are God's powers actively at work producing various results. As the Psalmist said: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee" (Psalm 139:7-12). It is very important that we recognize God's presence in the world, and that we remember that He is not very far from every one of us. "The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice" (Psalm 97:1).

God has preserved, controlled and directed all things which He created, in order that they might accomplish the purpose for which they were created. God has cared for His people, He cares for them now, and He will care for them in the future. God's purpose embraces the past the present, and the future; this world and the world to come. In the councils of eternity He formed a coherent and righteous plan for this world and all that is in it.

Before the artist touches the canvas with his brush, the picture is painted on the delicate walls of his imagination. Before the poet pens his inspiring lines, the thought is conceived in the sanctuary of his soul. Before the music is set in sharps and flats, the musician hears the song in the depths of his spirit. Before the sculptor lifts his mallet and chisel on the shapeless marble, the statue rises in his illumined mind. Before the earth was formed in beauty and symmetry, it was planned in the councils of eternity. Before man was created, he lay as a golden dream in the heart of God.

God has always been present in history, even though men have often tried to leave Him out. All history contains God, whether or not the human historian gives Him a place in its annals. Our loving and all-powerful God does not stay remote from His world, thinking nothing, caring nothing, and doing nothing about those who inhabit it. God has never abdicated His throne. He still rules. He is not going to banish Himself from the world which is in need of His wisdom and love.

God's eyes are always overlooking the nations. Patrick Henry said: "There is a just and true God who presides over the destinies of nations." All efforts to shut Him out of the nations are as impotent as they are futile. Before Him kingdoms have shaken, nations have rocked, and demagogues have vanished. All the movements of history have been with God's permission.

Who can fail to see the influence of God in our own nation? He may be seen in its discovery in its founding, its ideals, its purposes, and its progress. If ever the hand of God guided the destinies of a nation, molded and fashioned its very life, shaped its purposes, inspired its ideals, and intervened in its behalf in times of crisis, then this is true of this republic. What flag so epitomizes the heaven-born mission of a nation as does the Stars and Stripes? No wonder that these words flashed from patriotic lips! "We love our flag because of its resplendent history. We love it because it has shone in splendor at Yorktown and looked down in sorrow upon the suffering at Valley Forge. We love it because at its call the knightly sword of Washington leaped from its scabbard. We love it because it was saluted by Jefferson and highly honored by Patrick Henry's patriotic heart. We love it because Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Wilson battled and suffered for the things it symbolizes. We love it because

no chains clank on human limbs beneath it, and no act of dishonor has ever sullied its silken folds. We love it because it stands for honesty and honor; progress and peace; enlightenment and brotherhood; faith and freedom; God and right. We love its white, symbolic of a great nation's pure purposes; because its blue is typical of that nation's heavenly ideals; and because its red is emblematic of the blood which has flowed from patriotic veins, that it might flow forever over the home of the brave and the land of the free." No wonder we sing,

"Our fathers' God, to Thee,
Author of Liberty,
To Thee we sing:
Long may our land be bright
With freedom's holy light;
Protect us by Thy might,
Great God, our King!"

Our country is not blameless. Its greatest need is to turn to God in genuine repentance for our sins. We have grown rich, independent, indulgent, extravagant, wasteful, pleasure-mad, soft and sensual. We should repent and dedicate ourselves anew to the doing of God's will. To recognize God, to adjust your life to Him, to know His redeeming power, to experience His abiding companionship, and to obey His will constitute the highest experience that is possible for a human soul. It cannot go well with you if you reject the sovereignty of the everlasting God.

Nearly everywhere we look today we are faced by dissatisfaction, unrest, upheaval, strife, bitterness, revolution and trouble. We see unreasonable devotion to sensual gratifications, insane scrambling for gain, unmitigated villainies of multitudes of men and the unblushing vulgarities of multitudes of women. Civilization seems to be undergoing the frightful processes of self-burial. We are in great danger of handing down our blood-bequeathed legacies reduced in quality and in quantity. Moloch, the Spirit of unjust power, and Belial, the spirit of unholy pleasure, and Mammon, the spirit of unrighteous gain, are present in full force to corrupt and debase our people.

History tells us but one story about the downfall of the world's great nations. Strong at first because of the virility of its people, a nation rises to world power, then by its power acquires wealth, and through wealth sinks into luxury, by luxury becomes soft and spiritually decadent, and then falls an easy prey to a strong aggressor. That is the road upon which the majority of the people of our nation have embarked, and unless we change our ways a similar fate awaits this country.

Our heavenly Father is the God of justice. As the Psalmist said: "Just and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face" (Psalm 89:14). God's Word tells us why we have war: "They chose new gods; then was war in the gates" (Judges 5:8). The verdict of history is that payday comes for nations as it does to individuals, and that God does not destroy wicked nations until their cup of wickedness is full. Through the tribunal of God's justice the trees of injustice will be uprooted.

"This is my Father's world,
Oh, let me ne'er forget
That though the wrong seems oft so strong,
God is the Ruler yet!"

Though wicked men are having a succession of victories, this is God's world. Countless homes will be destroyed, millions of hearts broken, property destroyed that can virtually never be replaced, priceless shrines may be reduced to blackened ruins, and a loss of blood and treasure beyond estimate may face us. But this will still be God's world! Apart from salvation that is in Christ Jesus, the most comforting doctrine in our day and generation is the absolute sovereignty of our omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent God. Paul said that God "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will" (Ephesians 1:11).

While Toni Jo Henry, convicted of murder, was in the death cell of the prison at Lake Charles, Louisiana, awaiting execution for her crime, she was interviewed by a newspaper reported. She said to him: "I am scared because I don't know where I will be in September; I always knew there was a God running the show, but I thought maybe I could steal just one little act." Yes, God is "running the show." God still reigns, therefore, the wicked and the ungodly should prepare to meet Him.

Not long ago, in a discussion group, various scriptural doctrines were criticized. At a certain point one young man broke in and said: "I would gladly give all I possess if I could believe in God as my father believed in Him." That young man was simply acknowledging the disappointment and emptiness of a life which lacks the support and inspiration of religious faith; but why should anyone deprive himself of the cheer, hope, and genuine worth which trust in God imparts?