

The First Sunday in Advent
God's Purposes in History: He Controls All Things

I. IS ANYBODY IN CHARGE HERE?

II. GOD HAS PROMISED TO ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH:

A. Matthew 24:29-44 - Jesus Declares with Confidence:

⁴² Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what [**what sort of**] day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part [**what sort of hour**] of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. (Matthew 24)

The Master knows that thieves come in the night:

- At dusk?
- At midnight?
- At 3 AM?

B. The Prophets Prophecy with Confidence:

Isaiah -

700 BC - ¹⁹ And people shall enter the caves of the rocks and the holes of the ground, from before the terror of the LORD, and from the splendor of his majesty, when he rises to terrify the earth. (Isaiah 2)

The Apostle John -

95 AD - ¹⁵ And the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man, hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains; (Revelation 6)

Joel -

450 BC - ³⁰ "And I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, Blood, fire, and columns of smoke. **Joe 2:31** "The sun will be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes. (Joel 2)

The Apostle Peter -

30 AD - ¹⁶ But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel ¹⁹ And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; ²⁰ the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. (Acts 2)

C. God's Promise Is Certain -

¹⁴ For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.
(Habakkuk 2:14)

III. WHAT GOD HAS SAID WILL HAPPEN, ABSOLUTELY WILL TAKE PLACE. *Yet we are a people filled with fear!*

IV. WHAT WE FORGET: *God's control over all things*

A. But How Is this Control Possible?

1. "The Man Upstairs"?
2. An overgrown image of myself?
3. A really fine chess player?

B. God Made Everything; God Rules Over Everything:

¹ Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? ^{2a} All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. (Isaiah 66)

C. God Rules over Every Political Event:

¹⁷ Jeremiah prayed: "Ah, Lord GOD! It is you who have made the heavens and the earth by your great power and by your outstretched arm! Nothing is too hard for you...." ²⁶ The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah: ²⁷ "Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh. Is anything too hard for me? ²⁸ Therefore, thus says the LORD: Behold, I am giving this city into the hands of the Chaldeans and into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, and he shall capture it...." (Jeremiah 32)

D. God Rules Over the Events of Your Life:

¹³ For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. ¹⁵ My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. ¹⁶ Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them. (Psalm 139)

V. WHAT GOD IS NOT

A. God Is Not Limited by Our *Inability*:

¹⁰ But Moses said to the LORD, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." ¹¹ Then the LORD said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the LORD? (Exodus 4)

B. God Is Not Limited by the Events of the Natural World:

²⁴ And behold, there arose a great storm on the sea, so that the boat was being swamped by the waves ²⁶ Then he rose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. ²⁷ And the men marveled, saying, "What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?" (Matthew 8)

C. God Is Not Limited by the Most Powerful Men/Women on Earth:

³⁴ At the end of the days I, Nebuchadnezzar, lifted my eyes to heaven, and my reason returned to me, and I blessed the Most High, and praised and honored him who lives forever, for his dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom endures from generation to generation; ³⁵ all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, and he does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, "What have you done?" ³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble (Daniel 4)

D. God Is Not Limited by Human Planning or Reason:

²¹ Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the LORD that will stand. (Proverbs 19)

VI. SO HOW DOES THIS WORK?

God has made the world so that every freely taken human action only adds up to what he has ordained to take place.

- Events never flow outside the boundaries God has set for them
- The river of history will run to, and only to, the end which God has appointed for it

VII. HOW'S THAT, AGAIN?

God says to us, ¹⁰ "[I am the one] declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose" (Isaiah 46)

A. Don't Fear – his sovereign control is focused on your good:

⁴ The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens! ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, who is seated on high, ⁶ who looks far down on the heavens and the earth?

BUT!

⁷ He raises the poor from the dust and lifts the needy from the ash heap, ⁸ to make them sit with princes, with the princes of his people. ⁹ He gives the barren woman a home, making her the joyous mother of children. Praise the LORD! (Psalm 113:4-9)

B. Make Godly Choices

²⁷ Therefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable to you: break off your sins by practicing righteousness, and your iniquities by showing mercy to the oppressed, that there may perhaps be a lengthening of your prosperity."

C. When You Don't - Repent!

¹⁴ if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7)

D. Have No Fear of Mankind or even Evil Intentions:

Joseph:

²⁰ As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. (Genesis 50)

E. Walk in humility:

³⁷ Now I, Nebuchadnezzar, praise and extol and honor the King of heaven, for all his works are right and his ways are just; and those who walk in pride he is able to humble. (Daniel 4)

^{2a} "All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be," declares the LORD. ^{2b} "But who is the man to whom I will look? He who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word." (Isaiah 66)

F. Be as Confident in God's Love as He Is about His Own Sovereignty:

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

³³ Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died-- more than that, who was raised-- who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered."

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8)

G. Understand and Trust God's Mathematics - 80 years/eternity = "not worthy to be reckoned"