

The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns

John Brownlie (1857–1925)

The King shall come when morning dawns
and light triumphant breaks,
when beauty gilds the eastern hills
and life to joy awakes.

Not as of old a little child,
to bear, and fight, and die,
but crowned with glory like the sun
that lights the morning sky.

O brighter than the rising morn
when He, victorious, rose
and left the lonesome place of death,
despite the rage of foes.

O brighter than that glorious morn
shall this fair morning be,
when Christ, our King, in beauty comes,
and we His face shall see.

The King shall come when morning dawns
and earth's dark night is past;
O haste the rising of that morn,
the day that aye shall last.

And let the endless bliss begin,
by weary saints foretold,
when right shall triumph over wrong,
and truth shall be extolled.

The King shall come when morning dawns,
and light and beauty brings;
"Hail, Christ the Lord!" Thy people pray,
come quickly, King of kings!

ΤΩ ΚΡΟΝΟΥ ΚΑΙΡΩ

In the Nick of Time

God, Creation, and Humanity, Part 8: The Future of Human Dominion

Kevin T. Bauder

God has entrusted humans with the responsibility of managing the created order. He made it and brought it to a significant level of order and utility, but then charged them with exercising dominion, thereby increasing its order and usefulness. While humanity has fallen into sin, God has never revoked this fundamental human responsibility.

Nevertheless, fallen people do face increased obstacles to fulfilling their God-ordained responsibility to creation. One barrier is that sin has broken the created order. The world was never meant to be easily bendable to the human will, but now its resistance has increased to the point of recalcitrance. Another barrier is that since we are broken people, we tend to keep on breaking things. In particular, we keep damaging the created order. We damage it when we take wrong attitudes toward it, because those attitudes lead to actions. If we trivialize creation, we end up preying upon it. If we divinize creation, we will grant it a kind of autonomy that directly impedes our practice of dominion.

In view of the fall, the exercise of dominion has become immeasurably more difficult. Nevertheless, this human responsibility has not been revoked. Since God still holds people accountable to bring increased order to creation, what do they need to know? What will help them?

One very important truth is that God Himself is not finished with the created world. He has not written it off as a failed project, any more than He has written off the human race as a failed project. His intention is to rescue it. He will not only restore it, but also ultimately make it better than it would have been if sin had never touched it.

When Christ died on the cross, He died to provide salvation for individual sinners. He intended to rescue people both from original sin and from the sins that they had personally committed. Individual redemption, however, is not the only objective that Christ attained on the cross. His work also included victory over principalities and powers, which are spiritual forces opposed to God (Col 2:15). It included a plan for Israel and the nations (see Isa 9:18–25 for God's plans for Israel, Egypt, and Assyria). Indeed, God's



In the Nick of Time is published by Central Baptist Theological Seminary.

Permission is granted to duplicate for personal and church use.

www.centalseminary.edu | info@centralseminary.edu
900 Forestview Lane N, Plymouth, MN 55441 | 800.827.1043

plan is ultimately to sum up all things in heaven and earth under the authority of Christ (Eph 1:10). To accomplish this, Christ reconciled all things to Himself on the cross (Col 1:20). This reconciliation does not mean that all people will be saved, but it does mean that Jesus' cross-work touches every person and every object in the universe. The atonement resonates with consequences that are truly cosmic.

In an important sense, redemption extends to the created order, damaged as it is by the fall. Paul addresses this issue in Romans 8:19–23. There, Paul acknowledges that creation has been subjected to futility as the result of human sin (20). The present disarray of the created order includes things like fires, floods, blizzards, tsunamis and other events that wreak havoc. It also includes the predation of some creatures upon others. As Tennyson said, nature is “red in tooth and claw.” Pain, suffering, and death have come into the world as it now exists.

God does not intend this condition to last forever. Nor does He plan simply to destroy the present world. Instead, He purposes to set it free from slavery to corruption. He intends it to enjoy the glorious liberty of the children of God (21). In other words, a day is coming when the whole created order will be restored to peace, productivity, and wholeness.

When will that occur? According to Paul, it will happen at the revealing of the sons of God (19), the time when God's heirs will be put on display so that everyone can see and know their true identity. This revealing takes place when believers are visibly manifested as God's heirs at the redemption or resurrection of their bodies (23).

In other words, the future promises a time when the just will be raised from the dead and visibly glorified. When this glorification takes place, the whole created order will be restored to the splendor that it enjoyed before the fall. The present fallen creation must be restored, so the restoration must occur before the destruction of the heavens and the earth by fire (2 Pet 3:7–10). In the long run God wins within human history. He wins before the creation of the new heavens and new earth (Rev 21–22).

In this restored creation, humanity will assume its proper role in exercising dominion over the world. This fulfillment will center upon Jesus, who is the perfect human being and the prototype for what God means humans to be. Consequently, even though we do not yet see all things subjected to human dominion, we do see Jesus who, even during His earthly ministry, took dominion over the elements of nature. When Jesus reigns, the rivers will clap their hands and the mountains will sing together for joy (Psalm 98:8).

This restored earth under the rule of Jesus will exhibit tremendous fruitfulness. The plowman will overtake the reaper and the planter will overtake the grape-picker (Amos 9:13). Animals will no longer hurt each other. Even the lion will eat grass. Wolves and lambs, leopards and goats, cows and

bears will live peacefully together (Isa 11:6–9). Human dominion will be so complete that even a child will be able to manage these brutes. An infant will reach exploring fingers into the nests of cobras and vipers without harm. No one will hurt or destroy.

The Lord Jesus has already paid the price for these events to become reality. Every one of God's opponents was defeated at the cross. While the creation still groans and suffers labor pains (Rom 8:22), the time of its deliverance is speedily approaching. At that time, humanity—and especially the human king, Jesus—will assume fully the dominion over creation that God always intended.

God has not given up on the created order. He does not see it as trivial. Jesus has died and risen again, not only to redeem individuals to Himself, but to redeem the whole cosmos where it has been marred by sin. Christ will be head over *all* things to the Church which is His body (Eph 1:22–23).

If God values creation so highly, then so should His people. While they must take pains never to deify the created world or to turn it into an end in itself, they must never despise God's creation, neglect it, or treat it with contempt. Rather, they should embrace their divinely appointed role as guardians, caretakers, codevelopers, harnessers, cultivators, and conservators of the created order. They should so order the created world as to make it into the best that it can be while under the present circumstances.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
