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THE RULE OF CHRIST

Let Them Have Dominion

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GOOD FRIDAY 1977

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## THE RULE OF CHRIST

### LET THEM HAVE DOMINION

When we look at the world it is plain that mankind is the dominant species and exercises control over everything. Not that we do it very well but certainly we are able to dominate everything, even outer space. The Bible puts it this way, that when God created man he gave him dominion or rule over the lower creation. The intention was that mankind should rule and govern on God's behalf and in accordance with God's character and methods. God is essentially other person centred, and His rule is exercised in our interests, and not in His. The intention was that mankind should do the same for the lower creation. But things went wrong, instead of making God the centre of our lives, we turned away from Him and made ourselves the centre, and we exercised our God-given rule in our own interests rather than, as God intended in the interests of those over whom we were exercising the rule and government. And so it is today. We exploit the environment instead of tending it, and we dominate the lower creation instead of guiding it to its perfection. Worst of all, instead of being ruler we have ourselves become subjugated to the evil power of sin and selfishness and greed. There is only one man who has ever exercised rule in the way that God intended and that was Jesus of Nazareth. In Him God's purposes that mankind should exercise God-like rule in the world came to their fulfilment and it was in His death that He exemplified this rule and government most completely. For it was in His death He overcame evil, and instead of being subjugated to the devil, Himself conquered sin and Satan. In contrast we give in to temptation, but He resisted every temptation completely. Think for a moment of the events of Good Friday. Jesus was being falsely accused, his own disciple Judas had betrayed him, his friends had left him and he was being treated with injustice, he was ridiculed, exposed to shame and intense suffering. Never had self centred temptation a better opportunity to trip a person up. Yet Jesus completely resisted it. There was never a thought of self-pity, or of anger, or of expostulation with God. Jesus' faith never wavered. He recognized that everything that was happening was within the control of his heavenly Father and he told his disciples, "The cup which my Father has given me, shall

I not drink it. What perfect faith is here expressed. Nor was there any self-centredness in his thoughts. There was no word of self-pity, as we might be tempted, nor did he answer back when he was unjustly reviled, but suffered patiently. And his thoughts were for others. He thought of the safety of his disciples while he was being arrested, and when hanging from the cross in intense pain, he had a word of encouragement for the criminal who was being crucified beside him; he prayed for his executioners, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they are doing." And he took thought and provision for his mother. His dominion and victory over temptation, sin and Satan was complete. And moreover he accepted identification with the sins of the world, being made sin for us, bearing the punishment of sins that sinners like ourselves deserve, that by his bearing it perfectly we might be forgiven through his complete victory.

And so it was on Calvary that God's purposes for man were fulfilled by Jesus, who exercised true God-like dominion and rule over the ultimate enemy, sin and death. Good Friday is well named. Jesus' victory on Calvary over temptation and sin was crowned through the resurrection on Easter Day, so that he is now in God's presence on the throne, exercising God's power, dominion and rule. These are facts which have taken place on this earth, and if we recognize them by acknowledging that Jesus is Lord and submitting to Him in obedience we will share in that dominion that Christ exercised on earth, and exercises now in the heavenly sphere. For it is God's purpose from creation that mankind should have dominion, not the dominion and rule of pushing other people around, but rather the rule of love, through being other person centred, as God is.

The first Good Friday is the pivot of world history, the

first time mankind reached the objective for which he was created when Jesus exercised God-like dominion and rule. If we acknowledge this so that He becomes our ruler His death will be the means for our forgiveness so that we may stand with Him in God's presence and begin to experience what it means to exercise the dominion and rule of love.

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