

“Under His Feet”

Intro: Last year in the British Museum I was captivated by this Assyrian palace wall relief with the image of an Assyrian king with his foot placed on the neck of a bowing opponent. The relief pictures the aftermath of a battle between the Assyrians and an enemy and portrays the victory of the Assyrian monarch over the enemy king. It was the custom in the ancient Near East for the conquered king to bow before the conquering ruler and allow him to place his foot upon his neck. For the conqueror it was symbol of victory and dominion; for the conquered a sign of defeat and submission.

As I looked upon the scene I remembered a number of Biblical texts where this idea is found.

Israel's Victories over His Enemies

In the book of Joshua, when the Israelites came into Canaan to conquer it and take it as God's possession to them, an alliance of 5 kingdoms attacked Gibeon because they had made a truce with Israel. The Gibeonites appealed to Israel to come to their rescue and meet this 5 king alliance in war. God was with them in the battle and the 5 kings fled and hid themselves in a cave. After the battle was over Joshua brought these kings out and said to the chief of Israel: “Come near, put your feet on the necks of these kings. And so they came and put their feet upon their necks.” (Josh. 10:24).

The archaeological find makes it clear that this custom was common in the ancient world just as the Scripture affirms. And you can see how the Bible is always accurate in how it portrays the events of the ancient world. Even centuries later the Assyrians were still using this custom.

The act of putting one's foot on the enemy's neck was a symbol of victory and dominion. But more importantly to Joshua, the action was a pledge of success for those who feared and served the Lord. In connection with this symbolic act Joshua encouraged the people:

“Do not fear or be dismayed! Be strong and courageous, for thus the Lord will do to all your enemies with whom you fight.” (Josh. 10:25).

So the expression “under one's feet” was a familiar part of the vocabulary of the Israelites as they fought against their enemies. And it was to later play a special role in the promises of the prophets concerning Israel's king to come, the Christ.

Jesus' Victory Over His Enemies

Understanding this symbol enables us to appreciate the promise that God made concerning the Messiah in OT prophecy.

“The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.” (Ps. 110:1).

This psalm was probably a coronation psalm for king David; but it had a deeper spiritual meaning. David in the Spirit was giving a message from God about the Messiah to come.

Peter explained to the Jews on the day of Pentecost that Jesus had fulfilled the first part of the Spirit's promise through David when he ascended to heaven and sat down at the right hand of God.

“Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies a footstool for Thy feet.” ’ (Acts 2:33-35)

By the way, here we can clearly see that Jesus is not returning to earth to establish His kingdom as the premillennialists say and teach in the “Left Behind” books; but in fact, he is reigning now at the Father's hand in heaven!

However, a part of the promise remained to be fulfilled.

Note the second phrase, “until I make Thine enemies a footstool for thy feet”. To the Christ was promised not only a reign at God's right hand, but a victory of His kingdom over the kingdoms of Satan and this world.

“He must rule until all enemies have been put under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:25)

And so, in keeping with the Holy Spirit's promise the kingdom of Jesus Christ was established on the day of Pentecost and its king, Jesus Christ, has defeated those kingdoms of men that exalted themselves against the kingdom of God especially that last great kingdom of Daniel 2 & 7, the Roman Empire. When the book of Revelation describes the fall of this kingdom, the angels of heaven give their praise with these words:

“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever.” (Revelation 11:15)

But one enemy yet remains and it may be the greatest enemy of all.

For it has not failed to conquer all mankind. That enemy is death. But Paul explains that even this enemy will be put “under His feet”.

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. (1 Corinthians 15:25-26)

What a great statement this is! No man who has ever lived could conquer death; but our Lord Jesus Christ will do what no man has ever done! Even “death” will be put “under His feet”, bringing it totally under his dominion and power when He comes to raise the dead.

But what does all this mean to us? Why does it matter that everything has been put under Jesus' feet?

Our Victory Over Our Enemies

First if everything has been put under Jesus' feet, then it is His law and His will that we should obey!

Paul affirmed that Jesus now reigns as head of the church and King of Kings.

And He put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all. (Ephesians 1:22-23)

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (Matthew 28:18)

This is why the church does not need a council of men over it or a hierarchy of church rulers over it such as bishops, cardinals, and popes to make laws and decisions for it. For Jesus alone has authority over the church and over the kingdoms of this world.

Second, if everything will be put under Jesus feet, then the promise of Jesus' victory has great assurance for us as well. For if indeed we are citizens of His kingdom and soldiers in His army, then His victory is our victory.

In this world we face strong and powerful foes; but they are not our enemies only! They are the enemies of Christ. And through Him we will be victors over them all!

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written, "For Thy sake we are being put to death all day long; We were considered as sheep to be slaughtered." But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us.

(Romans 8:35-37)

Sometimes in life we may feel that the obstacles in from of us are far greater than our strength to overcome; but even then we need not despair for we have this promise:

And the God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. (Romans 16:20)

Sometime you may feel that Satan is pulling out every weapon in his arsenal against you! But if we are strong and courageous in Him, we cannot be defeated in fighting the good fight of faith! No matter how large the foe, no matter how skilled the warriors who oppose us, we can, through the power of Christ, overcome and conquer them all!

They will be put "under our feet"!

But at last no matter how bravely we have fought, no matter how faithfully we have served it will appear for a time that the enemy will have won! For we will all die. But even so, we have hope.

For since everything has been put "under His feet" we do not even have to afraid of death. He assures us:

"Do not be afraid; I am the first and the last, and the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades." (Revelation 1:17-19)

And he knew this victory was his before his even established His church. Listen again to these words!

"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. (Matthew 16:18)

What Jesus does in a single sentence is assure not only the establish the beginning of His church but its victory over the greatest enemy of all—death itself!

Conclusion: What powerful picture is portrayed by these three words! We serve a King who cannot be defeated. Just as through His power the persecution emperors of Rome fell; so through that same power the gates of Hades will come down and every faithful imprisoned soul will be set free to live forever with God. Our King will come for us and deliver us from death and bring us into eternal life with God.

But that hope is extended only to those who are willingly now “under His feet”. Are you acknowledging now the Lordship of Christ? The Bible tells us that at the judgment everyone will! But what about now?