

THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST IS NOT OF THIS WORLD

Jesus said, "*My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.*" (John 18:36). In this text we see two kingdoms contrasted -- the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of Christ. The kingdoms of this world are established and maintained by carnal weapons. The kingdom of Christ is established by spiritual means -- the gospel (Isa. 2: 2 - 4; Eph. 6:12,17; 2 Cor. 10: 4 - 5).

The kingdom of Christ has its reign in the hearts of men (Luke 17: 20 - 21; I Pet. 3:15; Col. 3:15); it does not come with pomp and splendor like the reign of temporal kings which merely control the external actions of men. The reign of the kingdom of Christ is in the hearts of men by the law of Christ (Gal. 6:2). It sets up its dominion over the passions and brings every thought in captivity to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10: 5; Mark 7: 20 - 23).

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world in **origin**. It was not planned in the mind of men, but was in the mind of God from eternity (Eph. 3: 9 - 11). It is the "*true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*" (Heb. 8:2). It is "*the stone cut out without hands*" (Dan. 2:34).

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world in its **future**. It was established on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Christ, 33 A.D. (Mark 9:1; Acts 1:8; Acts 2: 1 - 4). Christ began His reign over His kingdom then (Acts 2: 29 - 32). His second coming will not be to establish His kingdom (as the premillennialists teach); it is established NOW, and He is reigning NOW (I Cor. 15: 25 - 26). When He comes the second time He will raise the dead -- the good and bad (John 5: 28 - 29); He will judge the world (Acts 17:31); He will deliver the kingdom up to the Father (I Cor. 15: 22 - 28); the righteous will be gathered into heaven (John 14: 1 - 6); the wicked will go away into everlasting punishment (Matt. 25: 46; 2 Thess. 1: 8 - 9), and this old world will be burned up (2 Pet. 3: 10 - 12).

The kingdom of Christ is not of this world in its **glory**. The church (or kingdom) is glorious (Eph. 5:27) and it preaches a glorious gospel (2 Cor. 4:4), but men must learn that the glory of the kingdom of Christ does not consist of the things of this world. The kingdom of Christ, being a spiritual kingdom, does not express its glory in outward adorning or the things of this world. Peter said, "*whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.*" (I Pet. 3: 3- 4). So, the glory of the kingdom is expressed when we bear the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5: 22 - 23), live godly lives and do the spiritual work God would have the kingdom to do. Fine buildings, preachers with secular college degrees and human institutions do not express the glory of the kingdom of Christ.

Further proof that the kingdom is not of this world is that: (1) It is entered by a spiritual birth (John 3: 1 - 5); (2) It has a spiritual mission (Luke 19:10); (3) It is nourished by spiritual food (I Pet. 2:2); (4) Its growth comes from a spiritual seed (Luke 8:11); (5) Its weapons are spiritual (2 Cor. 10: 3 - 5; Eph. 6: 10 - 17), and (6) Its citizenship is heavenly (Phil. 3:20).

SOME OBSERVATIONS FROM THESE TRUTHS

One of the great errors of the human race has been to misunderstand the kingdom of Christ -- the Jews of Christ's day misunderstood. It has also been one of the great errors in the church to misunderstand the nature of the kingdom. About fifty (50) or more years ago one of the writers of the *GOSPEL ADVOCATE* (R. H. Boll) began to teach the doctrine of "premillennialism" (a materialistic concept of the kingdom -- the thousand year reign of Christ on the earth). This error caused strife and division and several churches espoused the doctrine. One of the strongholds for the doctrine was Louisville, Kentucky. This doctrine is not dead by any means -- there are several premillennial churches in the Louisville area today, several scattered over the state of Kentucky and in other states as well.

Many brethren who reject the premillennial concept have espoused a "social gospel", materialistic concept of the kingdom which is equally as wrong. The social gospel concept is that the social problems as such constitute a primary concern of the scriptures. The spiritual gospel concept is that the sole and primary purpose of the gospel is the spiritual salvation of man. The man with the spiritual gospel concept believes that the gospel has far-reaching effects on society, but that this is only a "by-product". (To illustrate: A man who is married becomes a Christian; he becomes a better husband and father, but he did not become a Christian to be a better husband and father -- he became a Christian to be saved from sin that he might go to heaven). The man tainted with the social gospel concept believes that one fundamental purpose of the gospel is the improving of the social circumstances of mankind and that this social gospel has spiritual by-products. The man with the social gospel concept believes the church should be used as a tool to aid in his social work. It is this attitude of heart on the part of the brethren which causes them to set up kindergartens to be run by the church; it is this attitude that causes brethren to support colleges and schools for secular education from the treasury of the church; it is this attitude that causes churches to have kitchens, scout troops and gymnasiums.

All the things I have mentioned in the foregoing paragraph are social in nature and their connection with the kingdom that is not of this world can in no way be justified! These practices and institutions have as much right to be connected with the kingdom that is not of this world as you would have in observing the Lord's supper in the local Lion's club next Friday night -- NONE!!

Brother, what is your concept of the gospel and the kingdom? Is it social or spiritual? If it is social, you had better re-read THE BOOK!

Donald Townsley

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