

THE MESSAGE JESUS PREACHED

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“Jesus went from village to village preaching the Kingdom of God” (Matt 4:23).

Have you ever considered why we today only see a form of godliness but no longer the true, powerful, and transforming message Jesus taught?

Do you realize that the message Jesus taught was also the message that He died for? In Matt 27 we read that Pilate asked Jesus, “Are you a king?” Jesus never denied this claim and answered with a “Yes, it is as you say.” When Pilate turned Jesus over to the crowd with the words, “Here is your king,” the crowd replied, “We have no king but Caesar”; however, above the cross we read the words “Jesus, the king of the Jews.”

Jesus proclaimed the Kingdom message. He introduced himself as a King when He said, “The kingdom is among you.” At the present, His kingdom only exists with those who do His will. That’s why He taught His disciples to pray, “Your kingdom come, Your will be done.” He also announced His kingdom was not an earthly force because His present rule begins in the heart and continues in the life of those who want to follow Him.

KINGDOM CONFLICTS

“From the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take hold of it” (Matt 11:12).

The kingdom message has been annulled today by objections, such as “the kingdom is not for today”; “we live in the church age”; or “the church and the kingdom are the same.” Why, then did Jesus state that He would build His church and that our task is to seek first the kingdom of God (Matt 6:33; 16:18)? Why is it so clearly written throughout the Bible that His kingdom is without end?

We live today in a time of role reversion, for we have become church builders, and as such, we leave the kingdom (and its message) alone. As a result, we have shortchanged our churches. Many have become commercial, divided, and because of their overhead, counter productive for Christ’s kingdom growth. Jesus wanted to build His church by divine direction. We, however, are building churches by human direction and according to the corporate systems of this world.

KINGDOM STANDARDS

“If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up His cross and follow me. For whosoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whosoever loses his life for me will find it” (Matt 16:24-25).

Who would want to be a loser in this life? We all are dreamers of the “American Dream!” Yet Jesus’ standard of following Him is total commitment and servant hood. What a contrast this is with the salvation messages of today. We have taken “cross bearing” completely out of the gospel. Most people have no idea what their cross really is. Our lives are filled with comfort and ease. The comfortable pew and the entertainment in our churches makes it very attractive to be among the “saved.” Our greatest cost is supporting the church. Ironically, that is just another human kingdom, and the spirit of materialism has gripped our churches as much as us as individuals.

KINGDOM AUTHORITY

“...He gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and send them out to preach the kingdom ...” (Luke 9:1-2).

Wherever Jesus or the disciples preached the kingdom message, that message was combined with signs and wonders. Having lost this message, the church today has become a movement that has a form of godliness but a denial of power (II Tim 3:15), and from such, we are told to turn away. I am not indicating that we should become “sign seekers,” but in all sincerity and humility “kingdom seekers” and worthy kingdom citizens.

Christ’s kingdom people are people who have power within them. They do not seek to be “at par” or identified with the world, but they have separated themselves from the desires and glamorous lifestyles the world admires. His true follower has accepted His standards of discipleship and their vocation in this life is to be useful kingdom agents. They do not give blindly to causes that spend God’s money wastefully and who are forever promoting themselves. In other words, this power is manifested in their lifestyle.

KINGDOM COMPASSION

Having overcome the sins of the flesh, such as laziness, extravagancy, greed, lusts, envy, anger, and pride, believers now live a life of love and compassion for the needs around them and throughout the world. Jesus had compassion for the poor, and our compassion must be expressed in Jesus’ name; otherwise, our actions are just those of human kindness.

“....anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name... will certainly not lose his reward”(Mark 9:41).

Compassion is feeding the hungry, helping the thirsty, inviting a stranger, visiting the sick and the prisoner, be it in the spiritual or physical realm. When these actions are done in the name of Jesus, we will be rewarded. As a matter of fact, Jesus offers us great rewards for doing what He wants us to do, and for being what He wants us to be, both now and in eternity. Most Christians, however, have lost their compassion because many causes to which they have been committed disappoint them by abuse and wastefulness.

KINGDOM COMMITMENT

Kingdom followers have accepted the “ruler-ship” of Christ in their lives. Their coming to Christ was not merely for personal gain—a “what is in it for me” commitment—but is an “all I have I give to you” commitment. We see this throughout the ministry of Christ. For example, the rich young man was asked to sell all he had in order to follow the Lord. On the contrary, Zaccheus said, “Look Lord, here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I cheated anybody, I will pay back four times the amount” (Luke 14:8-9), to which Jesus replied, “Today salvation has come to this house.”

Now we can see a kingdom perspective gives one a different view of Jesus. He is no longer merely a good Example, nor merely my Savior, but the Controller of everything I possess, and for me to live is Christ!

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