

The Kingdom of God Church and Kingdom

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For many people there is no distinction between the terms “church” and “kingdom” yet when you understand the Biblical significance of the distinction you’ll begin to see how our lack of understanding of this subject has taken us, historically, upon a course from which we need to recover but it is not simply a matter of deciding that we want to change. We must first understand what has happened and therefore what the change ought to be. You know everybody today is talking about the need for the church to change but not many people really understand “What would the change look like?” and “Why?”. So for the majority of church people—especially church leaders—there is this desire to balance between what they have known, what they learned in seminary, what they grew up with, what has been handed down since—in many cases either since the reformation if you are Protestant/Evangelical or Charismatic or what was handed down since the days of Rome, if you are Roman Catholic. But let us take a look in this program at the distinction between the “church” and the “kingdom”.

Foundationally, once we have this understanding, we will be able to understand such issues as the propriety of God’s government versus the way that man’s institutions work and we will begin to understand that what God had in mind is vastly different from what men actually ended up creating and maintaining. Frankly, as I said earlier, everyone knows that “something is wrong” but if you turn to the church to try to find what is wrong it is virtually impossible to figure it out on that basis. It is obvious that we have to go outside of the system of this thing called: “church” in order to understand what even the church is about. So what I’d like to do is begin with some definitions: “What is the church?” and “What is the kingdom?”. And once we understand what the church is let’s compare it to the kingdom and see what changes must come about as a result.

Let’s look at the gospel of **Matthew**, beginning at **chapter 16**, at **verse 13**. There it says, **“When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, ‘Who do people say the Son of Man is?’ They replied, ‘Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.’ ‘But what about you?’ he asked. ‘Who do you say I am?’ Simon Peter answered, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.’ Jesus replied, ‘Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for**

this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.’ Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.” (Inserted – **Matthew 16:13-20**)

Now in this reading Jesus said that upon the truth that Peter had just announced—which truth was that Jesus is the Son of God, the Christ—that He would establish His church. Now in the Greek, the term here is: “ek-klesia”. Now “ek” is “out”, “klesia” is “called”... so, “the called out”. When Jesus spoke here and used the word “ek-klesia” which now has been translated “church” in this very reading here—we just read, **“On this rock I will build my church.”**—Jesus used a word, in the Greek, that meant “the called out”. There is no place in the Scripture where the use of the word “church” refers to anything but “the called out”. “The called out” is also referred to as the body of Christ. We’ll find for example in the book of **Ephesians, chapter 5, verses 22 and 23**, “the church which is His body.” (Inserted – actual verse—**“Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior.”**) So there is no Biblical definition of “church” that is different from “the called out” or the “church which is His body”—of which He is the head, of which He is the Savior.

But why use the word “church” anyway? Well let’s take a look—historically. Historically, the English language evolved out of the roots that are called the Romance languages, which are the languages of Greece and Rome—so Greek and Latin. Now there are a number of other European languages that have the same origin. For example: French has that origin and Italian, Spanish, and Portuguese as examples. Now if you were to ask “what is the French word for “ek-klesia” or church?” The French word for church is eglise. Now you can see a direct correlation between the word eglise and the word “ek-klesia”. Similarly, the word for church in Spanish is the word “iglesia”. “Ek-klesia”... “iglesia”... and so on.

But with English, the word for “ek-klesia” is “church”... quite a different word, and in fact if you know much about northern European or Germanic languages, you will know, for example, in northern Europe the Swedish word for—it’s quite similar in Norwegian—for “church” is “kyrka”. In Scotland it’s the word, “kirk” as in, “I can’t hold a captain Kirk.” (Some of you are familiar with Star Trek) So what is the difference between this word: “kirk” or “kirche” in German or “kyrka” in northern European which goes to the word “church”, and in the Romance languages of which English has its derivative roots? “Kyrka” or “kirche” or “church” and “ek-klesia”, “iglesia”, “eglise”.

Well the answer comes to us from English history. I have here on my desk a book called: Tudor and Stewart Britain, written by John Morrow and it is a history of the

English church and the English people. Now when Henry VIII was ruling in England in the middle 1500's—in fact he died in 1549—he was a Roman Catholic monarch. Upon his death, first his daughter, who was known as Mary Queen of Scots, ruled for a brief time and then Elizabeth—his illegitimate daughter—came to the throne. Now Elizabeth was the daughter of Anne Boleyn, one of the seven wives of Henry VIII. When she came to the throne England was in a state of foment.

Mary, Queen of Scots had tried to return England to Roman Catholicism, the religion of her mother, Catherine of Aragon who was married to Henry the VIII. Henry, you will recall, broke from the Roman church—not primarily for religious reasons but because he couldn't get a divorce from Catherine of Aragon, who was the mother of Mary, Queen of Scots—couldn't get a divorce from her and Anne Boleyn was already pregnant and close to giving birth to the woman who would become Elizabeth. Upon Henry's death first Mary, the daughter of Catherine of Aragon and Henry came to the throne. She lasted a very short time and Elizabeth came to the throne about the year 1555. Well she [Elizabeth] ruled until she died on March 24, 1603 during which time England did not return to Roman Catholicism but it did not overtly encourage Protestantism. Elizabeth actually encouraged the English people to become distinct as a people.

Now when Elizabeth died the question of whether or not England would remain on the path of Protestant reform or return to the Roman Catholic fold was an unsettled question. Later that year, in 1603, James I of England who was by then a ruler in Scotland, a part of the British Isles so to speak—came to the English throne as James I of England. Quickly into his reign pressure was put on him to decide whether he would return to Roman Catholicism or he would continue to move towards Protestantism. Because he was James VI of Scotland it was reasonable to assume that he was under great pressure from the Scottish Presbyterians—who were also known as Jacobites—they supported his succession to the British throne and his claim to the British throne.

Early in his reign there was a plot to assassinate him—it was known as “The Gunpowder Plot” and a man named Guy Fawkes was found amid the barrels of gunpowder underneath the House of Parliament planning—as part of a conspiracy—to assassinate James when he would attend an opening of the House of Parliament. When the plot was discovered it was also reported that Guy Fawkes was part of a Roman Catholic conspiracy. James was satisfied with the information and decided that from that point on he had no friends among the Catholics so he moved England towards Protestantism and expelled the Roman Catholics.

Now until that time the Bible that was commonly used in English churches was the Latin Vulgate—the official Bible of the Roman church that had been translated by Jerome many centuries earlier—but because of its association with the Roman church it was seen, by James, as necessary to create a Bible in the tongue of the English people. There was a conference that met in one of the former castles of Henry VIII—a gift to him by

Archbishop Woolsley—and this came to be known as the Hampton Court Conference in about 1607, 1608. The commission of the king to the Hampton Court Conference was to produce a Bible written in the tongue of the English people.

In 1611 that commission produced a Bible in English and it dedicated that Bible to King James I of England and it came to be known then—and is still known today—as the King James version of the Scriptures. Now I am personally amused when I see Americans arguing for the King James Version of the Scriptures because there is no other version of the Scriptures in the English language that was written under such political factors as that particular version. Accuracy was often substituted for familiarity. When they came to the word: “ek-klesia” they used the Germanic word: “kirk” or “kirche” which was already in vogue because by then, everyone knew what a church was. A church, typically, was a structure in the style of Gothic architecture—stained glass windows and the like. So when they translated—in 1611—when they translated the word that Jesus used, “upon this rock I will build my “ek-klesia”, they translated it: “I will build my “kirche”... my building, my structure.

Jesus always intended something else. It was never in the mind of the Lord to consider the “church” as a building or as an institution. The “church” was always supposed to be “the called out”—those whom Jesus would call out of the world and would establish according to the foundations of authority that He got from the Father. The “church” was never meant to be a building or an institution. The “church” was always meant to be a people. So when, in the Scriptures, you read the word “church” it never refers to a building, it never refers to an institution; it always refers to “the called out”. Therefore it always refers to a people. So we started off on the wrong foot in that we got it wrong when it comes to what the church is. This fashion of building buildings and establishing institutions is un-Biblical. It is an attempt to form consensus and government based upon the will of the people and the favor of the government rather than on what the Kingdom actually is: the Kingdom is the government of God and the grant of authority from the Lord Jesus Christ.

The distinction then is this: the word “church” relates to the people and the word “kingdom” relates to the authority by which the people of God are meant to be governed. How are the people to be governed? By whose authority are they to be governed? They are to be governed by a sovereign grant of authority from the Almighty God granted to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord Jesus Christ giving that authority to men. The model of the institution and the building—though the word that comes to us comes from the English translation—that model pre-dates the English translation. That model has to do with a grant of authority by the government of Rome in the year 313 A.D. when Constantine gave to the church the authority and support of the Roman government to establish it as an institution that mirrored in its organization—in its institutional norm—mirrored the structure of the Roman empire.

You see approximately the year 85 A.D. a Roman emperor named Domitian came to the throne. He launched—against the church, he launched—against the body of Christ... the “called out”—a most virulent persecution. That persecution was not just in the public executions of Christians in places like the Hippodrome in Rome but it went further than that; it outlawed Christianity in the Roman Empire; it made it illegal for one to be a Christian in the Roman Empire. It took the civil rights of Christians, forbade them to hold public office, to own property, to assemble—all those rights that are common to citizens even then in the Roman Empire.

That condition of outlawing Christians throughout the Roman Empire continued until 313 A.D. with the Edict of Toleration passed by Constantine. Following that Constantine gave property and power and treasures and buildings and offices and legitimacy to the church because Christianity, at that time, was the only cohesive force throughout the entire Roman Empire. Constantine offered to the church *what it already had*. It had already overcome the power and the attacks of the Roman Empire in its attempt to extinguish it from existence. But it was a plan by the enemy of course to change the basis of the government of God from a basis of authority granted by God the Father to the Lord Jesus Christ by which the Lord Jesus would establish His church—those who were called out, those who would be His people, who would leave the world and would come to follow Him.

The fact of this is where the distinction between “church” and “kingdom” has fallen down. When you attempt to change all of this you cannot simply—now—add new things to the church. The structure was established by Constantine and it has been periodically reinforced at the favor and good will of nations throughout history. At the collapse of the Holy Roman Empire—and with the Reformation—we saw the phenomenon of state churches, the amalgamation of state power, the power of the Crown, in support of the church and this nexus has continued to this very day.

Most of the states of Europe—England, France, Germany, the Scandinavian countries, Italy, Ireland—most of the states of Europe—especially the former states of the Holy Roman Empire—have their state church. The American church is simply derived out of those people who immigrated from those countries into the United States. Practically all of the states of Europe—including Eastern Europe—all have their orthodox churches and those things represent the nexus between the power of the state in support of the church and the church, then, agreeing to support the state’s legitimacy.

Now this is what we have as church, even when you have the independent Charismatic Church; it is still the notion of the power of the people in support of the word of God and the strength of that movement. The alternative is: the power of the Holy Spirit in support of the gifts and the callings and the destiny of the people whom God has called out to be His people.

Now in our next broadcast what I wish to do is talk about the power of the Kingdom. We have taken a look, in this broadcast, as to where the word “church” came from and, more than that, where the power of the institution has come from and why it is that we cannot simply do some cosmetic changes and end up back in the Scriptures. It is a foundational issue and the time has come in the order of mankind where God himself is changing our understanding of what He has given us. There is an administration, suitable for the fullness of time, and that time has come. It is necessary. If you have been seeking the things of God; if you have known that something was wrong with the church... this is what is wrong. We are overthrowing these understandings in order to make way for what God is doing. I’m Sam Soleyn and I hope that you will continue to study with me.

Scripture References:

Matthew 16: 13-20

Ephesians 5: 22,23