

## The Culture of the Kingdom The Present Kingdom Part 2

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In the previous message, the first in this series entitled “The Culture of the Kingdom”, I laid out, using historical and contemporary observations and Scripture, I laid out the principle that the current church does not have the culture of the kingdom. One might say, “Well what is the importance of the culture of the kingdom and what do you mean by 'the kingdom', how is the kingdom different from the church?” Let me answer the last question, which is not in the proper sequence. If you do not have the culture of the kingdom, then the way you interpret Scripture will be more or less either on a traditional basis or an ad-hoc basis; meaning, your traditions will decide the meaning of Scripture or you will pull Scripture out of the Bible and quote it in support of anything you want to do as a contemporary initiative. In neither case are you going to do any more than make an argument to those who are inclined to believe your particular perspective.

In having the culture of the kingdom, we are meant to be given the mind of the LORD in a context by which we can properly understand what the Scriptures meant when they were written. Here I'm not speaking just of historic factors, I'm speaking about transcendent factors because the things of God do not change from one year to another; the foundations of truth do not change from one year to another in the sense that God knows the end from the beginning. So even though what God does in one epoch will be different from what He has done in a previous epoch or what He will do in a future epoch; there's an absolute consistency that flows from epoch to epoch because God knows the end from the beginning. Therefore in every time frame, what is occurring in that time frame has to do with what God has foreknown.

We must understand that the foundations therefore, that allow us to interpret the Scriptures consistently from one generation to another. I'll give you an example. If you understand that the purpose of God in creating man was to have a relationship with man as a son of God, then when God creates Adam and calls him His Son - Adam was the son of God according to Luke the third chapter the very end of the chapter - then you understand that here is something that God began the creation with that will move forward into time and with which He will conclude the purpose of this present creation. That is, all creation is waiting for what? For the revelation of the sons of God. Why is that statement relevant? Because God began creation by creating a son; Adam was the

son of God. But in the middle epoch - if you can call it that or at some point after Adam in another epoch and because Adam sinned - God brought another son into the world: the LORD Jesus Christ. And that Son redeems the effect of the sins of the first son so that the original purpose of God, that He would have sons, is fulfilled and through Christ we're all the sons of God by faith in the LORD Jesus Christ.

And it's more than just believing that He died on the cross, it's believing that He is the pattern Son and has been given to us to bring us, in Himself, to the Father. So that's what I mean when I say the paradigm of your understanding determines what you know about the Scriptures. But if you take Scripture based only on historical applications such as the Roman church, the Anglican church, the methodist church and so on, or any church that's really an orthodox church. Their idea with orthodoxy is to say, "We are the keepers of the traditions, the historical traditions, that go back to..." whomever, in the Roman church they say, "We are the keepers of the tradition that take us back to Peter." Now that idea is valid when you're talking about human monarchy's so that whoever is the son of the king, who becomes the son of that son, who becomes the son of that son...in a physical way takes you back to that king. But the kingdom of God has nothing to do with that which is physical; the kingdom of God is spiritual, for no one is physically the son of God. We are spiritually made to be the sons of God in Jesus Christ.

So there is a model that is meant to bring us back to the purposes of God and it's not physical, it is not physical. It is irrelevant who, in the institutional model, succeeds Peter for example. It's absolutely irrelevant because the purposes of God will unfold from one generation to another to another. We're not merely the custodians of history but I mean if you want to talk about the issue on the basis of history, I'll point out that the Roman church did not exist for the first 250 years of the churches existence. It did not come into effect until Constantine the Great, with the Edict of Milan, gave the authority of the Roman empire to the church. In all the time prior to that, nearly from it's inception, the church was persecuted by the Roman empire.

My point is, that even with those who claim an historical trek back to Peter, have the problem of a different model being introduced by Constantine and they are the inheritors not of Peter, but of that model. But no one needed to be the inheritor of Peter in the first place because that is like talking about the son of a physical king- earthly king – succeeding his father and then the son of that next king succeeding his father and so on and so on and so forth; this is not the model of the kingdom. If that were the case, unless you were of that bloodline, you can't be king. They have this amalgamation of spiritual and physical functionalities because they understand the very problem: Peter didn't have any children that we know of, he was married but he didn't have any children that we know of. But interestingly enough, this is a model that's not uniquely Christian, in it's application in religion, it's not uniquely Christian. The Muslims have this great debate over who was the proper successor of Mohammad. Whether it was his daughters son or

the children of his uncle; that would determine whether you are a Shiite or a Sunni.

So this notion of being physically in succession...of course the Roman model, understanding that Peter had no children, again although Peter was married had to find a way to create a successor to Peter. And so they created an institution which they say had the right to determine who the successor of Peter is. But none of that's the biblical model, but frankly we don't care what the Bible says. But the truth is, that unless you have the culture of the kingdom, you cannot properly understand the Scriptures. And having an historic tracing back to the time when the Holy Spirit was replaced by the authority of the Roman empire as the foundation of power and authority of the church, that is hardly an appropriate substitute for the work of the Spirit. Now you say, "The work of the Spirit, what's the relevance of that?" At the heart of the understanding of the kingdom is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Turn with me to the book of Romans chapter 14 verse 17, it shows us the centrality of the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing forth the model of the kingdom. In Romans 14:17 the following is said, "For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. Because anyone who serves Christ in this way is pleasing to God and approved of men." Brings us squarely to the question then of: what is the relevance of the culture of the kingdom in understanding the Scripture, and parenthetically being and remaining relevant in every age of mankind? We know that the present church has come to be seen as largely irrelevant to the populations of the earth, we understand that the reason it has is because it does not represent a heavenly culture, it represents either an historic culture (as in the Roman church and all of it's progeny) or an ad-hoc culture as in the case of the Charismatic and some evangelical churches, especially the mega church, that's just the ad-hoc culture of the guy in charge; he makes it up as he goes along. And it's a mixture of marketing and whatever tradition he came out of. You see if he came out of the baptist church you can be sure that his core doctrines will be baptist, but his methodology in the applications of those core doctrines will be market sensitive, market driven.

This should be obvious to everyone, I think that it's becoming increasingly obvious to everyone. On the other hand, the historic churches keep plodding along, decrying the decline of society but contributing to it's decline by the conditions and the activities of it's people and even of it's priests and leaders. It's time, simply put, it's time for the culture of the kingdom to be restored to the people of the kingdom. But we must first address this issue of the kingdom and the existence of the kingdom because in a majority of cases nearly all of these churches teach that the kingdom is not presently in existence, therefore they have substituted the theology of going to heaven and they've marked out how they intend to get you to do that. And they have put their resources together to marshal their forces to preach a gospel that is designed to emphasize people going to heaven.

We said earlier, Jesus sent us to make disciples. And what He meant by that, He himself both practiced and taught; He made disciples and He told His disciples to go and do the same. Now what did He tell them to do and what did He himself do? He said of Himself, "I only do what I see My Father doing, the Son can do nothing of Himself." So His own personally adopted definition of discipleship was being led by the Holy Spirit moment by moment. For example in Matthew 4, first verses, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. I promise you, no one wants to be in the wilderness tempted by the devil unless the Holy Spirit leads him to do that. From the beginning He shows that He was led by the Spirit.

So He himself showed His disciples, everyday, what it meant to be led by the Spirit because He walked day by day, moment by moment, doing only what He saw the Father doing. He was not going to do that Himself, disciple His disciples into that way of being, and then send them to go win souls, which has become our present language. No, He was going to send them to teach the people to obey the LORD in everything, just like He obeyed the Father in everything and He had taught His disciples by His own obedience to the Father, moment by moment, in their presence, everyday, 24-7; that's what they observed Him doing. So when He said, "Go and make disciples," He had done it to them and they knew what to do. But He didn't leave it up to some conjecture, He specifically said, "Go and make disciples of the nations, teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you." Now that's not sending His disciples to teach the nations of the earth how to obey the Old Testament and obey the New Testament; He's sending His disciples to teach the people, by the disciples own obedience among the people, how to obey the Holy Spirit moment by moment. Why? Because the Holy Spirit is the one He sent to bring His power and His authority to the earth. He said, "All power, all authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth, go ye therefore."

Now interestingly enough, He sends them to Jerusalem to wait for the coming of the Holy Spirit. After He has commissioned them to go, He says to them, "But go to Jerusalem and wait for the promise you've heard Me speak about. John indeed baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. This is Acts 1. Well, why the Holy Spirit? Because we read in Romans 14:17, "The kingdom of God is not a matter of food and drink, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit." Well we need more to flesh that out. When Jesus himself was on the earth, He taught that the kingdom was at hand. He said to His disciples in Matthew 10, "Go, preach, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.'" Now look, my glass is at hand, what does that mean? It's within my reach, it's at hand, it's within my reach. It is within the purview of where you are.

In Mark chapter 9 verse 1 and in Luke chapter 9 verse 27, Jesus makes it abundantly clear that the 'at hand' was this, "There are some of you standing here who will not taste of death until you see the kingdom come with power." That's His definition of at hand,

“Some of you standing right here will not die until you see the kingdom come with power.” Well they're all dead, what does that mean? That the 'at hand' has now become the reality. But the kingdom in fact came. And we know that people were put in the kingdom because in Colossians chapter 1 verse 13 the Scriptures say...Paul speaking to the church in Colossi said, “God has translated us,” He's lifted us up from 'this' location and put us down in another place. God has translated us, transferred us, changed our location from, “meth-is'-tay-mee” (the Greek term). He has lifted us up and put us down into....He's taken us from the control of darkness and put us down in the kingdom of the Son whom He loves.

So you say, “How could you possibly be in the kingdom that has not come?” So from the point where Jesus said to His disciples, “Go and teach the kingdom is at hand,” this is Matthew 10, to Mark 9:1/Luke 9:27, “the kingdom will come within the lifetime of many of you standing here.” Well then, the obvious question is: how did the kingdom come and how is that related to the Holy Spirit, why then must you be lead by the Spirit moment by moment and how is this to be walking in the kingdom? What kind of culture does this produce that permits you then to interpret the Scriptures the way they were originally written and their relevance for today? And how does this rescue us from the meaninglessness of church, whether it's historic church that's based in an idea of maintaining the history of succession, or the ad-hoc church which is a mixture of historical and marketing techniques? That's the key, that's the essence of it. And when we understand this, it will turn our faces away from this debauchery and helplessness into which the church has fallen and it will renew us according to the ways of God.

What about the Holy Spirit then? “The kingdom is not a matter of talk, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” How did the kingdom come in the Holy Spirit? Note this from the book of Luke the 17th chapter verse 20, you've got to see this. In Luke 17:20 it says, “Once having been asked by the pharisees when the kingdom of God would come,” a directly relevant issue, “once having been asked by the pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, 'The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is' or 'there it is' because the kingdom of God is within you.’” The kingdom of God is within you. It does not come by observation, so you can't see it in some sort of manifestation that will appeal to the human senses. Why? Jesus gave us the key in John the third chapter when Nicodemus asked Him about His own conduct. And what was Jesus' response? He said, “Unless a man is born again, he cannot see the kingdom. And unless he is born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom.” Now, water and the Spirit. The Scriptures unfold the very meaning of that when in Ephesians 5, Paul speaking to the Ephesian church, says to a man that the husband should “Wash the wife with the water of the word.” So what is meant by being born of water is to have the renewing of your mind by the word of God and by the Spirit of God. So it's the word and the Spirit that produces a person in the earth who is capable of being born of both of the word and the Spirit, who then sees the

kingdom that cannot be seen by the mind of the unregenerated person and allows you to enter into that.

So what are we saying? We're saying that the kingdom has come, it came on the day of Pentecost when suddenly from heaven there was a rushing mighty wind and cloven tongues like as of fire sat on the heads of each of the disciples and they began to speak as the Holy Spirit gave them utterance. Later that day, at the end of their speech, 2000 were saved and from that point on the kingdom, having come, advanced in the Holy Spirit and by the Holy Spirit. Now what followed was a renewing of the mind and a renewing of their understanding and what became the evident reality was that Jews who hated Gentiles (if Peter is any example in the New Testament, going to the house of Cornelius) Jews who hated Gentiles and Gentiles, like Romans who just as soon crucify Jews as they would speak to them.

These very diverse people, each one walking in the Spirit by the end of the writing of the New Testament, there's a model of these people living together in such perfect harmony and well being that something had come to the earth that had solved the problems of mankind, the problems of envy, bitterness, hatred, all the things that the world presently is beset with were present in the first century and the early church became a model of the resolution of precisely these conflicts. Because the church had a culture of the kingdom. It said in four parts, it said, "They continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers," Acts 2:47. Let us explore the culture of the kingdom beginning in the next series of messages. This entire series is entitled "The Culture of the Kingdom". This is our path back to what is in fact true, what is in fact what God gave us.

I'm Sam Soleyn and I hope you'll follow in our discussions subsequently. See you then, bye bye