

The Culture of the Kingdom The Summary of the Culture of the Kingdom

Studio Session 154
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05/07/2008

I have been speaking about the culture of the kingdom. The significance of this topic is that whether we realize it or we do not, we view all things through the paradigm of culture. In the West, our culture has been formulated around Roman tradition influenced by Greek thinking coming through the time of the formation of the Holy Roman Empire, nations arising out of that, the break up of that monolith and the creation of independent nations seeking their own destinies. The arising out of this particular background of the model known as the State Church, which in effect becomes the church of a particular race of people.

When you take all of that together and form it into and grind it into a lens by which you view history and particularly by which you view the Scriptures, then the things of the Bible, the things written in the Scriptures, become distorted through those lenses. What the Bible actually means has then been made subject to the interpretations that come as a natural and proximate result of applying those standards. But that's true of anything. The paradigm of our understanding is the thing we overlay over any subject area and it forms our prejudices and predispositions so that what we end up seeing is to a great extent predisposed by the focus of our vision based in our culture.

In order to understand the kingdom as it actually is, the Lord must as it were 'open our eyes' to where we can see the way we ought to see. Jesus himself spoke about this dilemma of the cultural norm predisposing the viewers to understandings that are fundamentally erroneous. The book of Matthew, for example, the 14th chapter Jesus had just spoken a parable to His disciples in which He had said to them, He had explained principles of the kingdom to them in an analogy of how a sower went out to sow and sowed seeds in different types of soils. His disciples came to Him later on and they said, "Lord we don't understand. You normally speak to us plainly but You're speaking to the multitudes in parables. Why are You talking to them in parables?" And Jesus gave this shocking answer, He said, "I'm speaking to them in parables because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not neither do they understand." Now what does He mean by "seeing they see not and hearing they hear not neither do they understand"? What He means is, these are people who see only what they want to see, they hear only what they

want to hear, so they're ever searching for affirmation of what they already see, what they already hear and what they already believe. But you, you who have left everything to follow Me Peter had said, "Lord we've left everything to follow you," He said, "Your eyes are blessed because they do see and your ears blessed because they do hear." So He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you and not to them. That is why I speak to them in parables." And then He goes on to quote Isaiah chapter 6, which talks about how "this people close their eyes and stop their ears lest they should see and hear and should turn and I would heal them" and then He finishes by saying, "Now listen to what the parable of the sower means," and He tells them plainly what He means by what He says.

The same thing is true today, there are people who are so addicted to being reinforced in their historical beliefs that they do not understand the Scriptures and even when the Scriptures are spoken to them, they will refuse to hear and resist the meaning of Scripture. It is why, for example, in this series I spoke about the parable of the good Samaritan and showed how even well informed believers have been informed to a great extent by tradition. And how on one hand we interpret the parable of the good Samaritan as a mandate for doing good to people, whereas Jesus told us the parable that we might understand the entire gospel, of how Adam was in creation having been robbed of his authority to rule by an enemy who left him neither dead nor alive; half-dead. And you remember the story, first the priest comes down, finds him, goes around, indicating the law is unable to reconcile man to God. Similarly the Levite - the religious functionary - when confronted with the mans condition of being separated from God also went around because he can do nothing to effect mans separation from God. But the Samaritan, the perfect picture of God and man comes and finds him. So the One who is speaking to him is the Samaritan, a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ who binds up his wounds pouring in oil and wine, (blood and Spirit) - by the blood He pays the price, by the Spirit He gives him life - takes him to an inn where he takes care of him, has the innkeeper take care of him. Because he's on a long journey as Jesus himself is on a journey - He came, He went and He's coming again - he takes out two silver coins, two days pay, and in effect pays for the care - for our care - for two thousand years and says, "When I come again I will reimburse you for what else I might owe you," and in speaking about this and His disciples He says, "When I come again I will say, 'You've given to these the least of My brothers and therefore I attribute it to your account in that you've done it to Me'."

And as I use this example I simply wanted to show how our culture superimposed upon our vision, superimposed upon the Scriptures, cause us to see the Scripture in a manner different from how the Scriptures actually are. And we used the four culture pieces of the early church to illustrate the very principle. In the early church it was said that they continued steadfastly in the apostles doctrine, in fellowship, in the breaking of bread and in prayers. But because Western culture, Western church culture says there are no apostles anymore, then we interpret the apostles doctrine to mean the works of Luther

and Calvin and the church fathers before them and people like John Wesley but no more the work of the apostles in our day and time, notwithstanding the fact that the Scriptures are very plain that there are apostles today. And without revisiting this issue, I will remind you of Acts 14:14 which calls both Barnabas and Saul apostles, making it impossible to say that there are no apostles today because neither Barnabas nor Saul were among the original twelve. And that of course is a message I've taught, it's available on the website and available for your preview simply by going to the website and obtaining the information on receiving the apostles and the prophets.

The point is, there are apostles today and since there are apostles today then the apostles doctrine means more than 500 year old church doctrines. The apostles are and have been the messengers, the 'mailmen' - if you will recall from this series - who deliver the mail from heaven. In the arrogance of Western culture we often will say, "Well why do I need someone to tell me what God is saying, I can hear God for myself?" Well that's true and not true. It's true in that the Holy Spirit speaks to you and not only can you hear God, you should hear God but the Holy Spirit does not say to you in that fashion, everything that you need to hear because some things are spoken to the church as a whole and not to you individually as part of your daily walk with God or part of your own personal circumstances.

In order for God to speak these things He must give gifts to men by which gifts He's able to communicate these things. So He gave some to be apostles. The gifting of apostleship is to understand the order of the kingdom, to reveal mysteries and to demonstrate power. These are things that apostles did in the first century. The reason being: that the church needs order, the believers need to understand the mysteries of God which are the children's bread and every believer needs to be able, when it's necessary, to operate in power. Well we do not go from a standing start to these full blown conclusions of a mature believer. God puts these things in the Body through the gifts that He has given as vehicles by which He intends to impart these great truths into the Body of Christ. And so the gift of the apostle is that gift by which God speaks a word from the mouth of God to the ear of the hearer and whoever has an ear to hear will hear it. God typically does not speak this word through what might be considered the average believer, although the Holy Spirit will speak to the average believer about all manner of things involving his or her life and circumstances. But there are things beyond that that require a gifting that allows for the word to be reliably communicated to the believers in that epoch and time.

So with apostles the early church continued in what the apostles were telling them because the apostles bring the current word of God; the thing that God is saying in the earth today. And these things typically come as part of the revealing of mysteries. For example, the church in Jerusalem in the first century was comprised primarily of Jews, Jewish converts, Peter was the most notable among them and Peter had no intentions of bringing the gospel to the Gentiles because Peter had a problem with the Gentiles. He

could not see them as being included in the grace of God. So God called Paul, a Jew raised among the Gentiles, to be the instrument of God by which this mystery of how God was reconciling the Jew and the Gentile to Himself in the one Body of Christ to reveal that mystery to the whole Body of Christ. Even though Peter himself - being involved with Cornelius and his household, received the initial revelation of this mystery - he had no heart and had no predisposition to being useful to God for the full revealing of and implementation of this mystery. So God raised up and God always intended to raise up the apostle Paul as the revealer of this mystery. The revelation of this mystery fundamentally changed the direction of the church. If it were left up to the brothers who were Jewish, the church would never have embraced the Gentiles. However, because of the mystery that God revealed to Paul, the counsel in Jerusalem in Acts 15 was convened precisely to discuss the admission of Gentiles across the board into the Body of Christ.

So apostles are the ones who bring that current message from the throne of God into the Body of Christ, their word inaugurates a new season, releases a new economy from heaven and sets the church on another course which is meant to complete the work for which Jesus came into the world. Obviously God is not going to do that through just any believer. So in the arrogance of the Western church that has set aside the work of the apostles in favor of individualized Christianity, the thing that we miss altogether is what God is saying and doing in the world today. So we keep revisiting 500 year old doctrines, and I refer to 500 year old doctrines as the revelation of God given to Martin Luther 500 years ago. Many in the church have not advanced beyond that, or 250 years ago the word of the Lord being given to John Wesley. Many in the church have not advanced beyond that because they have failed to receive the apostles.

When you do not receive the apostles, you remain stuck in that historical time warp and you're known for being a consumer and a purveyor of old things that largely no longer appeal to the world. It isn't that our gospel must first appeal to the world but it is that the Body of Christ and the message of God does in fact speak to the issues of mankind in the day of mankind with current relevance. Most of what is said in the church today, though true, is not relevant. People of the world today are not preoccupied with issues of transubstantiation or issues of predestination, their issues are quite different. It's not that these are unimportant issues, it's that they're not current. So if we keep bringing people back to these things, they will consider that to be a Christian is to bifurcate reality into those things that are historical and allegorical and mythological and the things that are current. That's why the church today looks to science for truth and religion for belief. They do not see, and they divide the world into 'logos' and 'mythos'; mythology being religious truth and logos being scientific truth. And so there's a kind of an uneasy concession that says, "There are things beyond science which we'll relegate to church but all things that we consider current and relevant have to be proven by science." The fact is, most of science is just new religion because the conclusions that come out of the things that are observed in science are religious explanations masquerading as science. The

theory of evolution is a religious theory of the origins of the species, it's not a religion that has anything to do with God, it's a religion that has to do with "How do you arrange this information into a belief structure?" But that's because we don't have apostles today.

The culture of the church was foundationed upon the existence of apostles who brought the current word of God and gave direction and insight to the Body in every epoch. Fellowship, instead of this being meals together, fellowship is the way the house of God is arranged because fellowship is a reference to the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; the way the Spirit assembles the parts of the Body together to form the one Body. The Head is Christ, the rest of the Body is comprised of the members arranged in the fashion of the Holy Spirit's arrangement. So the principle of the fellowship of the Spirit is that which talks about the arrangement of the house of God, how the house of God is arranged in such a way that the gospel is given visible presentation through a patriarchal order because the gospel is how Adam, when he sinned, was separated from his Father and how in the end of the age God was going to restore the hearts of the fathers to the children and the children to the fathers. The spirit of Elijah, "My father, my father," is that which sees the human father presenting God the Father to those who are meant to be the children of God. A mature, Godly father who has children who are both natural and spiritual to whom he is the model of God the Father.

In this discussion we touched the question of whether women may be spiritual fathers and saw that God is presenting analogies in natural circumstances to help us understand the realities that are spiritual. So it has nothing to do with the importance of a man or the importance of a woman that determines the role to which they've been assigned. God assigns the man to represent God in certain ways in creation; God assigns the woman to represent aspects of the character of God in certain ways in creation and He doesn't mix the metaphors because if He does of course it would create confusion. God is not the author of confusion but the author of peace. We see that these representations do not speak of the value of a man versus a woman, that our value is determined by our sonship and both the man and the woman are equally sons of God.

So the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is the arrangement of the house of God. The apostles doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread...the breaking of bread we saw by looking at the motif of bread in the Scriptures; bread that brings death, bread that brings life. Jesus says, "I am the bread of life come down from heaven," whereas bread (or food) from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God had said, "When you eat of it you will surely die." The soul of man has been fed by the notion that he is God and until the One who is Lord – the Lord Jesus – is "re"presented – presented again – we have no bread to sustain our spirits lives.

So bread from heaven is that which restores us to life. The culture of the kingdom surrounds the breaking of bread because in this order we're able to relax enough to permit

the Christ in us to be seen for who He is and we're relaxed enough around the others in whom the Christ in us lives to be able to speak to us and to the void in our persons.

So we see that the arrangement of the church is either the church in a city or the church that meets from house to house. There is no reference to a congregation of strangers meeting to hear a word from God but instead we see people of a certain spiritual household meeting together to receive the Christ in each other and to be fed with manna from heaven in that respect. God does not permit us to divide the Body and therefore splinter or fracture the message of Christ. When you learn from a patriarchal father in whose household you are and among the brethren with whom you regularly fellowship over meals, you learn then that the Body is one body. When you meet together for a general meeting of the whole church in the city, you will understand coming to that meeting that though you do not regularly fellowship with these others, that you are part of the one Body of Christ. And so when you come together in those settings it usually is to hear from an apostle. So that's the order of the arrangement of the house of God.

And finally prayers. We saw prayers analogized in the Old Testament as the altar of incense, we saw Jesus coming into the earth and being given a gift of incense because He is the one who brings our prayers to the Father, He's the one to whom we submit in order to have access to the Father. There are different kinds of prayers, the prayer of the mature believer is that which agrees with the will of heaven on the earth and like prayers in the analogy of both the Old and New Testaments - from the books of Leviticus and Revelation - when the prayer of the righteous agree with what is true in heaven, God releases power from heaven to accomplish the will of God on the earth as it is in heaven. The early church began to pray in that fashion to align themselves with the will of God in heaven.

The prayer of faith is for the healing of believers who are struck by sickness relating to demonic engagements. And a young believer may pray for anything they want to and God will meet them where they are. So there are different types of prayers. But the highest order of prayer is to agree on the earth with what is already true in heaven. The four cultural norms of the kingdom: the apostles doctrine, fellowship, the breaking of bread and prayers. When these are restored, our paradigm of understanding will be restored so we could see the Scriptures as they actually are.

I'm Sam Soleyn, God bless you. I'll talk to you again, bye bye.