

CHRIST'S METHOD OF ESTABLISHING THE KINGDOM & THE NATURE OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM

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Christ came to establish His Kingdom at the beginning of His ministry with the words:

Mat. 3:2. "Repent ye: for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand." See also Mat.4:17,23.

In Matthew chapter 5, He announced the manifesto of his government and even stated how people are considered great in the kingdom? Mat. 18:1-4.

This Gospel of Kingdom shall be preached to world as a witness before end comes, He said. Mat.24:14.

Who did Jesus say will inherit the kingdom. Mat.25:34.

In Luke 17:20,21, He said the Kingdom cometh "not with observation...lo, the Kingdom of God is within you.

He also mentioned in John 3:5, that to see or enter the kingdom, ye must be born of the water and of the Spirit.

He stressed in John 18: 36,"My kingdom not of this world,..if My Kingdom were of this world, then would My servants fight."

In Rom.14:17, He highlighted that the "kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost".

The great Apostle Paul added in 1 Cor.6:9,10 that certain classes of people shall "Not inherit kingdom of God, neither ..unrighteous, fornicators, adulterers, effeminate, abusers.." Gal.5:21.

His method of establishing His Kingdom included Christ attempting no civil reforms

"The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses, -extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must

reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart." **Desire of Ages pg.509.3**

Jesus Christ did not come to this earth as a political activist to transform society. Followers of Jesus are called to be radical spiritual social activists who place no trust in politics, governments, or nations to transform the world.

Martin Luther King Jr was a social activist who attempted civil reform using a pacifist non-violent approach against the racist social system of his day. In the same way, many today view Jesus' treatment of women, lepers, beggars, and non-Jews in the gospels as merely nice, because they fail to interpret them in the light of Jesus' own cultural context. But if we understand Jesus' actions against the backdrop of first century Palestinian culture, however, it becomes clear that Jesus' treatment of people went far beyond being nice. Almost every single aspect of his life, teachings, and ministry, revolted against some unjust aspect of his culture.

In Desire of ages pg. 206.2, we are told

"A wise purpose underlay **every act** of Christ's life on earth. Everything He did was important in itself and in its teaching."

Also in Desire of ages pg.273.6, we understand that

"The calling of Matthew to be one of Christ's disciples excited great indignation. For a religious leader to choose a publican as one of his immediate attendants was an offence against the religious, social, and national customs." D.A pg.273.6

Yet He still went ahead and called and included a publican among his disciples contrary to the national, social, and religious norms of His day. Nothing could stop Jesus from challenging and revolting against these customs, no matter how traditionally engrained they were for centuries. He came to establish the divine will of God on earth. They were not based on the Word of God nor on biblical tradition. Also, for example, when Jesus set aside the riches of his divine prerogatives and sided with the poor and oppressed (2 cor.8:9), He was revolting against a social system that economically

privileged a few by oppressing the masses.

When Jesus praised the faith of a Roman centurion and held up Samaritans (in direct contrast with Jewish leaders), as heroes in some of his illustrations, He was revolting against the racism of his day.

The respectful way Jesus treated women—even women with disreputable histories—revolted against the sexism of his day. Interestingly however, yet Jesus never included a woman among his chosen disciples in an ecclesiastical leadership position. Why? Was he afraid to attempt reform in this area at a time when women were subordinated to men?

They were many wealthy, intelligent, devoted and influential women in Jesus' day, even among His followers. Yet not one of them was included among the twelve ordained apostles. Why? He could have hinted something by simply including only one, even if only in a passive way, in the establishing of the future organization of the church. But

Remember, “a wise purpose underlay every act of Christ's life on earth. Everything He did was important in itself and in its teaching.” DA 273.

In seeking to establish His Kingdom after the New Covenant Divine will of God, Christ broke down every barrier, tradition and superstition men had erected to obscure the nature of His kingdom. We are told that

“It was at the ordination of the twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ's departure was to carry on His work on the earth.” AA 18.1.

“Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God's kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy....” AA pg.20.1.

The dignifying way Jesus interacted with and identified with beggars, and other questionable characters in society, revolted against a social system that ascribed worth to people based on their class, gender, wealth, and power. The beautiful way he befriended sinners, and the way he consistently violated inhuman religious rules (e.g healing people on the Sabbath) revolted against the religious oppression of His day.

Clearly then, Jesus' lifestyle wasn't merely nice: it was revolutionary. This revolutionary lifestyle got him crucified. This also says much about the unique nature of Jesus' revolt and the Kingdom He came to establish.

Most Jews of Jesus' day expected and wanted a Messiah who would support their patriotic convictions and lead them in a military uprising to overthrow the Romans who had been oppressing them for centuries. To everybody's surprise, including some of His own disciples, Jesus refused to play this role. (We supposed that it would have been He to deliver Israel). Jesus never yielded to the patriotism of his day, and far from leading a military charge against Rome, Jesus allowed himself to be crucified, shattering their future hopes.

So, Jesus' life of revolt was not primarily to create a more just society, it was to reveal the Character of God and the nature of his kingdom. (John 17: 4, 6). The Kingdom of God was perfectly embodied in Christ. Everything Jesus did and taught, reflected His Father's beautiful Character and Divine will. (John 6:38)

Jesus had said, “My kingdom is not of this world.” This is why everything He did and taught revolted against aspects of society that were inconsistent with his Father's Character and Will. Jesus' life and death demonstrated that it is impossible to live under the reign and Kingdom of God and not be a social revolutionary. In other words, we cannot be involved in a great controversy without being controversial.

Jesus came primarily to establish the Kingdom, but he could not do that without overthrowing the powers that control these ungodly systems. See 1 John 3:8 which says that he came “to destroy the works of the devil”.

The self-sacrificial love displayed on Calvary, and the power of God displayed in Jesus' resurrection broke “the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil”. Hebrews 2:14.

In giving His life, Jesus “disarmed the powers and authorities” and “made a public spectacle of them” (Colossians 2:15). And when Jesus rose from the dead, “all things”—including God's enemies—were placed “under his feet” (Hebrews 2:8), and He was seated “far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that can be invoked” (Eph.1:21; Col.1:20).

Just as many aspects of His life constituted a social revolt, so too many aspects of his life constituted a spiritual revolt. Every act of revolt against oppressive, unjust, and dehumanizing aspects of social systems was at the same time an act of revolt against the powers that fuelled these ungodly systems.

Jesus' revolt against such things as greed and poverty, social oppression, sexism, racism, classism, nationalism,

and violence, was itself a form of spiritual warfare. Jesus was a social-spiritual revolutionary. All Christians who have the mind, spirit and attitude of Jesus Christ are called and empowered to imitate Jesus' kingdom lifestyle. (Rev.17:14; Galatians 2:20).

God wants to reproduce His character and lifestyle through his church. Christ the Head has already gotten the victory at Calvary, now he wants to reproduce that same victory through His body, the church.. (See 1 John 2:6; Ephesians 5:1,2; 1 Peter 2:20,21; Ephesians 4:7-27; Colossians 3:1-17).

While we are to live in peace and submit to the law of whatever country we find ourselves in, insofar as this is possible (Romans 13:1-7), we are commanded to "obey God rather than man" when the two come into conflict (Acts 5:29; 4:19).

"And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind..."
Romans 12:1,2.

"Don't let the world squeeze you into its own mold.." J.B.Phillips version.

We must always remember that our struggle is "not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:11,12). We are to see ourselves as soldiers in war, stationed behind enemy lines, whose job is to obey our commanding officer, as he uses us to tear down enemy strongholds.(2 Timothy 2:4; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5)

Throughout his life, teachings and ministry, Jesus never showed the slightest interest or involvement in politics. Many of the Jews in His day were looking for a political, militant, and nationalistic messiah who would resolve all their political controversies, and ultimately free the Jewish people from their Roman oppressors.

At times, seeing his power to heal, teach, exorcise and feed multitudes, they tried to get Him to fit into their expectations, crown him king, or to get him to weigh in on their hot political topics. But without exception, Jesus refused even to comment on these issues. He responded to them, but never on the terms their questions set. He consistently found a way of transforming their questions to Him regarding the kingdom of the world into His questions toward them about the Kingdom of God. (For example, whether or not Jews should obey the law of the land and support the oppressive Roman government by paying taxes. His answer using a coin was to render

to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's.)

Some Christians have cited this reference as their duty to their government –to be good, obedient citizens by compromising, to vote, to serve in office, bear arms or even to fight for their nation/country. Jesus' teachings implied nothing of the sort. He did not come to answer our political questions, but to establish a radically different kind of kingdom. To plant the mustard seed of a new, alternative world order under the Kingdom of God.

The only instructions Christians are given vis-à-vis government in the New Testament is to respect, and submit to authorities as much as possible, to pay our taxes, and to pray for leaders so there will be peace (Mark 12:13-17; Romans 13:1-7;1 Peter 2:13-17). And even these instructions are not given out of any concern for how government should run but simply to facilitate the spreading of the Gospel.

MY KINGDOM IS NOT OF THIS WORLD

When Pilate asked Jesus if he was the king of the Jews, Jesus replied,

"My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders." (John 18:36).

His kingdom was on a completely different plane and from another place. The most fundamental feature of earthly governments is that they are willing to use whatever force is necessary to protect, and advance their self-interest. Any government that tried to love, bless, and serve threatening enemies rather than retaliate against them would not long survive.

"He (Jesus) could not employ the kingdoms of the world as a similitude. In society He found nothing with which to compare it. Earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power; but from Christ's kingdom every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion, is banished." AA 12.2

Rather than using a sword against enemies to defend and advance its cause, Christ's kingdom "that is not of this world" relies on self-sacrificial love and forgiveness to advance its cause. This is simply because the King is just like that in character and spirit. He does not use force in any wise to put down rebellion and has the highest respect for his creatures' freedom of choice even if it is contrary to His.

Therefore, to reject the king was to reject His kingdom and the principles of that Kingdom, which involves No force, No partiality, No selfish motivation, No retaliation but only service and love to others. And rather than seeking to kill them for exercising the freedom given them, He leaves them alone and gives them up to reap the consequences of that which they have sown. (Galatians 6:6-9; Romans 1:18,20,24,26,28; Hosea 4:17) (see also DA 387,759.)

When Peter took out his sword to defend Jesus and ended cutting off a guard's ear, Jesus rebuked him and then demonstrated the unique way warfare was to be fought in God's Kingdom. He demonstrated God's love for his enemy and served his enemy by miraculously reattaching his ear. (Luke 22: 50,51).

Then also, hours after Jesus' discussion with Pilate, rather than using power that was available to Him to defend Himself and crush his enemies, Jesus waged war a unique kind of war, by allowing himself to be mocked, tortured, and killed by his enemies. He offered Himself up out of love for His enemies and on behalf of His enemies. He manifested no hate or retaliation.

In Christ's kingdom, warfare is never waged against flesh and blood. Instead, it is waged against the powers of the rulers of the darkness of this world. Therefore, it is never carried out by the power of a sword or gun, but by the power of self-sacrificial love in service to others—including one's enemies.

In Revelation 19:11, Christ who is called "faithful and true" "doth judge and make war" "in righteousness". Love for enemies and refusal to use violence is the most visible way the Kingdom of God differs from worldly kingdoms. This has to be so because from the beginning of the war (Rev.12:7),

"Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power." DA 759.1

God's kingdom will be most clearly manifested in the way we treat those with whom we come in contact. Much is accomplished when we speak the truth about God and his character. However, much more is possible when we implement this truth about God's loving

character by our lifestyle in the way we care for the people with whom we come in contact.

"The kingdom of God's grace is now being established, as day by day hearts that have been full of sin and rebellion yield to the sovereignty of His love. But the full establishment of the kingdom of his glory will not take place until the second coming of Christ to this world."

"The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven," is to be given to "the people of the saints of the most high." Daniel 7:27. They shall inherit the kingdom prepared for them "from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34. And Christ will take to himself his great power and will reign." MB 108.1

"Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit.

"As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12, 13. Here is the only power that can work for the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practising of the Word of God." DA 509.4.

Not with outward show. Luke 17:20-21.

"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said. The kingdom of God cometh not with observation; neither shall they say, lo here! Or lo there! For, behold the kingdom of God is within you."

When we are wholeheartedly submitted to the kingdom of God (mat.6:33), we live as "aliens and strangers" in whatever country we happen to find ourselves. (1 Peter 2:11). Like soldiers stationed in a foreign country, we are never to become too preoccupied with the "civilian affairs", but should focus on pleasing our "commanding officer" (2 Tim.2:4).