

31. The Kingdom Is the Key

An accurate understanding of the kingdom of God is the key to understanding the collection of writings we commonly call the New Testament. That accurate understanding begins with recognizing that “a kingdom,” as can be found in any common dictionary, is a realm in which the king issues forth laws and commands and the subjects of that realm obey the edicts of the king. Anything else, even a democratic monarchy, is no longer purely the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is nothing if not pure – and it is *purely* a kingdom. Any expression of following Christ and God that does not literally and actually seek and practice obedience to the King – both in His words (the Bible) and by His Spirit (the Spirit of truth, the Word of God) – is a counterfeit “Christianity.”

Churchianity, the great falling away from the faith that comes before the return of Christ (2 Ths. 2:3), is almost entirely separated from the literal and true Headship of Christ and instead follows after its heaped up teachers (2 Tim. 4:3-4) and its “pastors” who claim to have the special sacred anointing that gives them the right to stand and lord over their own “congregation” and “flock.” (Mt. 24:5) This is, in a word, the “church” paradigm. Churchianity most often puts the local “assembly” or “congregation” (formulated most often according to centuries-old errors and deceptions) first and thereby (because of both the misguided methods and misplaced priorities) the kingdom of God (that realm where Christ is truly the King) is not brought forth in our midst. In those few, smaller and more-isolated places where Christ is actively sought and obeyed, the “church” errors and deceptions hold little power over the genuine subjects of Christ’s kingdom.

Having said all this, we must also recognize that a merely intellectual understanding that the kingdom of God is the key to the Scriptures is not enough. Without our ongoing obedience to the teachings and Spirit of Christ, any knowledge we attain will only add to our judgment as we will surely be required to answer for any differences between what we knew and what we did. And the first command that must be obeyed is this: “You must be born again.” Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God... Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water [physically] and the Spirit [spiritually], he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh [physical] is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’” (Jn. 3:3, 5-7) Unless we have entered into Christ’s kingdom through this new spiritual birth, any knowledge we gain about Christ’s kingdom will remain fleshly or carnal, a realm of enmity against God. (Rom. 8:7)

In his second letter, Peter is warning the true believer about the dangers which false teachers and their doctrine present. He begins with the greeting, “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord...” (2 Pet. 1:2), then goes on to describe what can be called “the steps to spiritual maturity” (2 Pet. 1:3-7), and then concludes this list by saying, “For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. 1:8) At the end of this letter, after all his warnings and exhortations regarding the false teachers and their doctrines, Peter writes, “You therefore, beloved, since you know beforehand [that those who are untaught by the Spirit of Christ and who are double-minded and unstable in their spiritual life twist and distort the Scriptures to their own destruction and that of those who follow after them], beware lest you also fall from your own steadfastness, being led away with the error of the wicked; but [instead of being destroyed with them] grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” (2 Pet. 3:16-18)

Growing – remaining in the process of pressing on toward spiritual maturity – is the only way to be assured of remaining in a position of steadfastness. The “church’s” “pastors” and teachers, many of whom are the very false teachers Peter was warning his readers of, have concocted “theologies” of “once saved, always saved” and “eternal security” which dismiss and deride Peter’s admonition that we need to continue to grow so as to be assured of security in Christ and His kingdom. In many of these “theologies,” “salvation” is a position and not a process. In the New Testament, being saved is a process and the believer who is actively and diligently working out his salvation with fear and trembling (Phlp. 2:12) is the one who can best rest assured that he is being saved.

The “church” is built on the false premise that the tares are and must always be a part of the assembly (see the parable of the wheat and the tares – Mt. 13:24 and following) – and the devil loves that many people who name the name of Christ over their lives believe this lie to be true. The tares are the sons of the devil planted in a field which Christ said was *the world*. (Mt. 13:38) Only by concocting the religious façade of the “church” was the devil able to lure the true sons of the kingdom away from the pure way of ekklesia (the Greek word mis-rendered “church” in most English New Testaments) in the kingdom of God and seduce them into cross-pollinating themselves with the tares. Christ’s true ekklesia is ***and can only be*** populated with believers who have obeyed Christ’s command to be reborn from above. The “church” is, at best, a “mixed multitude” and it is from this impurity that we are called to “Come out from among them...” (2 Cor. 6:17)

The “church,” being one of the devil’s most effective deceptions, most often teaches its members to dismiss outright that the devil is in any way dangerous to anyone. Oh, perhaps he is dangerous to those sinners hanging out at the bars or to those homeless beggars out on the streets doing their drugs and their flagrant sins and maybe dangerous to those folks at the “church” down the street but the devil is “a defeated foe” for anyone who faithfully attends *this* “church” especially if it’s a house-“church”! That this deception is not recognized for what it is stands as the best evidence of just how effective and powerful the devil’s deceptions are. For those who don’t love the truth and who prefer the religious façade of “church” in contrast to living out the truth and righteousness of Christ’s kingdom of light, God Himself will personally send them “strong delusion” to confirm them in their belief of the lie that their abominable spiritual practices are indeed approved by God. (2 Ths. 2:10-12)

Paul clearly told us that we do not wrestle against flesh and blood (human beings) but against *spiritual* beings when we seek to take up arms for the kingdom of Christ and God: “We wrestle...against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.” (Eph. 6:12) This list of the devil’s armies arrayed in opposition to the kingdom of Christ and God are to be *wrestled against*, not ridiculed or ignored or dismissed as buffoons and “toothless old tigers.” Indeed the devil has been defeated by Christ at the cross (Col. 2:15) and the gates of Hades (the prison gates of death and darkness) shall not prevail against Christ’s true ekklesia, those genuinely born-again believers who assemble to corporately obey the King in matters regarding their own temporal circles and spheres of influence. (Mt. 16:18) But the individual who scoffs at and neglects to obey Peter’s injunction to “Be sober, be vigilant [watchful]; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Pet. 5:8) is well on his way toward being the devil’s next “guest” for lunch and may soon become just another of the devil’s tools “having been taken captive by him to do his will.” (2 Tim. 2:26) Such a one is an excellent candidate for “church” leadership! Indeed the devil and his armies of wicked spirits are much

more effective in their “propaganda” war against “church”-ites than they will ever be in any face-to-face conflict they might experience with genuine sons of the kingdom.

When the sons of the kingdom resolve to follow Christ wherever He leads them (Rev. 14:4) and to shake off the contaminants of the devil, the “church” and this world (2 Cor. 7:1), then they “will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father.” (Mt. 13:43) But so long as true believers voluntarily place themselves at the feet of men and wrangle with one another about which teacher or which doctrine is paramount, the kingdom of God will remain completely out of reach for these deceived and deluded souls. Until Christ is truly the King of our lives – individually and corporately – we will be subjects and servants of some kingdom other than Christ’s.

Indeed it has been rightly observed that Jesus proclaimed the kingdom of God but it was the “church” that came into being.

Let he who has ears hear – and take care that *no one* deceives him. (Mt. 24:4) Amen.

Chapter 30: Pressing Into the Kingdom

<http://paidionbooks.org/girard/tgotk/30pitk.pdf>

Chapter 32: Still Close at Hand

<http://paidionbooks.org/girard/tgotk/32scah.pdf>