

Session 9—The Kingdom and The Christian and the Social Order

The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Point 1: When we say that “God is sovereign”, we are speaking of His rule over the universe and His rule of those who accept His gift through Christ.

God has the right, as Creator, to rule the universe.

Genesis 1:1

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Acts 17:24

24 “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by hands.

25 And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything, because he himself gives all men life and breath and everything else.

He rules in the hearts of men who accept Him.

John 3:3-5

3 In reply Jesus declared, “I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.”

4 “How can a man be born when he is old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb to be born!”

5 Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

Point 2: God’s kingdom comes on earth when non-believers accept Jesus as their Lord.

Luke 17:20-21

20 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,
21 nor will people say, ‘Here it is,’ or ‘There it is,’ because the kingdom of God is within you.”

Point 3: God’s kingdom will be fully consummated on earth when Jesus returns.

Revelation 12:10

10 Then I heard a loud voice in heaven say:
“Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God,
and the authority of his Christ.

The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Point 1: Christians should seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society.

Matthew 6:9-13

9 “This, then, is how you should pray:
“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name,
10 your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
11 Give us today our daily bread.
12 Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.’

Matthew 6:33

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Point 2: Making the will of Christ supreme in human society is only helpful when rooted in salvation through Christ.

“Since all social injustice is rooted in sin in the human heart, efforts for improving the social order and establishing righteousness must begin in the regeneration of the individual person.” (Herschel Hobbs, “The Baptist Faith and Message”, p.129)

1 Corinthians 2:12

12 We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

13 This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

14 The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.

The Baptist Faith and Message gives examples of what Christians should do to influence human society:

In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death.

This section is prefaced by “in the Spirit of Christ”. Christ should be our guide in all forms of social action.

“Jesus was opposed to every form of man’s inhumanity to man. He recognized the evil systems which violated the dignity of human personality (such as slavery). But he attacked them from within, seeking to change men’s hearts so that redeemed men would live together in peace and love. Paul, Jesus’ greatest interpreter, followed the same pattern. It is the pattern which should be used by every Christian.”

God is love. Jesus is love as well. Jesus showed His love for individual men and women. Jesus did not require people to clean up their act before He would help them; nor did He require them to be sinless before he ate, drank, and fellowshiped with Him:

Matthew 9:10-13

10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and “sinners” came and ate with him and his disciples.

11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?”

12 On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.
13 But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”

Luke 15:1

1 Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him.
2 But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”
3 Then Jesus told them this parable:
4 “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it?
5 And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders
6 and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’
7 I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

How Christ dealt with those in sin:

- The woman at the well (John 4:4-28)
- The woman accused of adultery (John 8:1-11)

When Jesus dealt with people in His earthly ministry, He showed them the love of God first, then dealt with their sin. Those whose sin He addressed directly were those who should have known better; specifically, the religious leaders of His day.

Jesus also told us that we should be more concerned about our own sin than that of our brother:

Matthew 7:4-5

4 How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye?
5 You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

When a brother commits a sin that needs to be addressed, Jesus also gives us instructions on how to handle that:

Matthew 18:15-17

15 “If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.
16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’
17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Jesus hates sin. He never sinned during His human life. Jesus knows what sin does to us. Jesus spoke out loudly against sin:

Matthew 5:29

9 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Matthew 13:41

41 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil.

Matthew 18:6

6 But if anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.

Jesus told His disciples that the greatest commandment was to “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” The second commandment He gave them was to “Love your neighbor as yourself.” It is no coincidence that both of these commandments have to do with love.

Point 3: In attempting to make the will of Christ supreme, we must act in love and not compromise Christ or His truth.

The non-believers in this world will never accept us. Jesus told us so:

Matthew 10:22

22 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

No matter how tempting it may be, we cannot waver from the truth of God’s word just to bring someone to Christ or to “make the will of Christ supreme.” We are the face of Christ in this world. A non-believer’s image of Christ is formed by his experience with Christians. Love should permeate all of our actions.

Conclusion

“He began with the individual and worked out into society. Rather than picket the home of Zacchaeus, he entered it and led him to become his disciple. Thus he changed a crooked chief publican into a philanthropic tax commissioner. (Luke 19:1-10)...his teachings clearly show his purpose of developing his followers into Christians whose lives would help to transform the social order (Matthew 5:13; 7:24).

Jesus rejected all efforts to establish his kingdom by violence or by forced reform from without (Matthew 11:12). Rather, he proposed to redeem men and then to send them into society to change it into God’s will and way.” (Herschel Hobbs, “The Baptist Faith and Message”, p.129)