



OUR TRUE COMMANDER IN CHIEF
Kingdom Politics – Part 2
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As Christ followers, the Bible teaches us to see ourselves differently from our fellow citizens. Wherever we reside and whatever the form of government we live under, believers see themselves first and foremost as citizens of another kingdom – the kingdom of God. This is a fundamental building block in our political perspective. If we lose this perspective, we lose hope and accommodate ourselves to the brokenness of this fallen world. But with it, we remain hopeful regardless of the political climate. Join us Sunday online or in person for the second installment in our series, Kingdom Politics.

I must proclaim the good news (the gospel) of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose. Luke 4.43

“You cannot know anything about Jesus – anything - if you miss the kingdom of God... You are zero on Jesus if you don't understand this term. I'm sorry to say it that strongly,

but this is the great failure of evangelical Christianity. We have had Jesus without the kingdom of God, and therefore have literally done Jesus in.” - Gordon Fee, Jesus: Early Ministry/Kingdom of God

The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent and believe in the good news. Mark 1.15

But if it is by the Spirit of God that I cast out demons, then the kingdom of God has come to you. Matthew 12.28

The gospel is less about people inviting Jesus into their hearts and more about people being invited into God's kingdom which represents God's heart for the world.

It's about God's reality breaking into the present reality.

1. THE POLITICAL LANGUAGE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

Understanding the environment into which the church was born

Caesar Divi F

“Providence ... has brought into the world Augustus and filled him with a hero's soul for the benefit of mankind. A Savior for us and our descendants, he will make wars to cease and order all things well. The epiphany of Caesar has brought to fulfillment past hopes and dreams... the birthday of the god [Augustus] has been for the whole world the beginning of gospel (euangelion) concerning him.” - The Priene Inscription (9 BCE)

❑ Hijacking the language of the empire

But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace..." Luke 2.10-11, 13-14 (NRSV)

2. A DIFFERENT WAY OF SEEING OURSELVES

If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, because of this the world hates you. John 15.18-19

*For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.
Philippians 3.20*

*For here we do not have a permanent city, but we are looking for the city that is to come.
Hebrews 13.14*

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. Hebrews 11.13-16

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. 1 Peter 2.12

❑ Cultivate the mindset of an exile and an immigrant

“...millions of people who rely on Jesus Christ for their eternal destiny have problems translating their religious beliefs into action beyond Sunday mornings.”

- Barna Report, May 24, 2004.

“The result was that many of the Jews had become so comfortable and prosperous that, when the call came for them to return and undertake a journey of some 900 miles to a city in ruins and a temple that no longer existed, they simply could not rise to it. The cost was too great and the shock to their system too disturbing... they were refusing to live up to their destiny as God's chosen people.”

- Peter Williams, Opening up Ezra

3. KINGDOM LIFE IN A FOREIGN WORLD

❑ Jesus' Kingdom Manifesto

“We are like tourists who, solely for amusement, use a quaint and obsolete guidebook. While we travel comfortably by rail, we read the book's description of the perilous roads and trails. Smoking a cigar in a snug cafe, we read of dangerous robber bands who assault travelers in the region... while we enjoy our worldly comforts, we get a faint emotional glow from the reading of the Jesus whom we would never be so foolish as to obey.”

- Søren Kierkegaard

“If you're wanting a Jesus radical enough to transform the world, you will find this Jesus in the pages of Matthew's gospel.” – Mahatma Gandhi

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6.33

“What if being courageous these days means becoming an alternative to the culture, not an echo of it?”

- Carey Nieuwhof, *New Exodus: Four Reasons People are Leaving the Church*

“It’s easy to have political views – that’s what politicians do. But it’s much harder to embody a political alternative – that’s what saints do.” - Shane Claiborne, *Jesus for President*

☐ *Jesus for President*

Where is your hope?

“My president has already ascended the throne and has already delivered his State of the Union address. I don’t believe that God needs a commander-in-chief or a millionaire in Washington, and I have little faith that either of the likely options will incarnate the Beatitudes, the Sermon on the Mount, and the fruit of the spirit. I will declare my allegiance from the mountain tops, joining the chorus of the saints and martyrs. And I will raise the banner of love above all flags.” - Shane Claiborne, *The Irresistible Revolution*

“Suppose the [Christian] coalition became known for transforming people’s lives instead of trying to transform Congress, the White House and the Supreme Court? Might it be argued that their example would be so compelling that millions of Americans would want to follow it? Conservative Christians claim that by force of numbers

alone, which they do not have, they can redeem a culture gone sour. [But] it won't happen through the ballot box, no matter who is elected. It can happen only through the heart." - Cal Thomas

"While politics is based on the premise that society must be changed in order to change people, in the politics of the Kingdom it is people who must be changed in order to change society." - Chuck Colson

"We failed not because we were wrong about our critique of culture, or because we lacked conviction, or because there were not enough of us, or because too many were lethargic and uncommitted. We failed because we were unable to redirect a nation from the top down. Real change must come from the bottom up, or better yet, from the inside out."
- Cal Thomas

❑ To be a surprising people

"We are called to be a surprising people."
- Dietrich Bonhoeffer

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The Kingdom of God is the very antithesis of the kingdoms of this world. In what ways is the Kingdom of God different from what we see and experience in this world? Describe and discuss those differences.



2. In what ways is the Christian life like that of the immigrant or exile? How mindful are you of this truth? In what ways will remembering your citizenship in the kingdom of God effect how you live from day to day? God's people who were carried off into Babylonian captivity so acclimated themselves to life there that the vast majority did not return to Israel when given the opportunity. What can we learn from their experience?

3. Chapters 5-7 of the gospel of Matthew contain Jesus' teaching entitled the Sermon on the Mount. Take some time to look over these chapters. What has always stood out to you about what's contained in these chapters? What do you find most challenging?

4. Take some time to pray the Lord's prayer together as a group. This is an example of kingdom praying. But it's not just in declaring "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done", it's everything about this prayer. As you pray it alone or together as a group, talk about how the different aspects of the prayer represent God's kingdom heart.

5. The German pastor and theologian, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, said after reading the Sermon on the Mount, "We are called to be a surprising people." Sadly, many so-called Christ followers are anything but that. When was the last time you were surprised, had your breath taken away, because of what you witnessed happening in an exchange between a believer and non-believer?