

THE “CHRISTIAN AGENDA” OR THE KINGDOM OF GOD?



Here's the choice we face, as believers in North America:

Am I pursuing the Christian Agenda?

Or am I pursuing the Kingdom of God?

Why a choice? you say. Is not the Christian Agenda the same as the Kingdom of God? Are not the leaders of our Biblical Christian faith making clear the demands of God's Kingdom in this pagan world?

After all, the Christian Agenda makes a lot of sense. Are we not to hold life sacred? Are we not to guard the sanctity of marriage? Isn't it important to make sure that Christian values are written into the laws of the land?

And if it becomes necessary to compromise with the dark powers to achieve these goals, surely God understands. God is blessing our efforts abundantly these days.

Christian values are on the rise in Washington and across the continent. True, there is a resurgence of “faith” in many places. Huge assemblies of believers are popping up in cities from coast to coast. Christian TV and radio and publishing are thriving. The Christian Agenda is having an impact.

*But does the Christian Agenda
manifest the Kingdom of God?*

Does it truly reflect the gospel of Jesus?

*Is it producing men and women who are crucified with
Christ? Dead to themselves and alive to the Father’s
will?*

WHERE THE CHRISTIAN AGENDA AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD PART WAYS

Power

It all comes down to power. What kind of power drives us? What kind of power do we rely on, as we make our way through this troubled world?

There are only two kinds of power, as far as the Kingdom of God is concerned: the power of this world, and the power of the cross. According to scripture, the power of this world--- money, the sword, political influence, etc--- is spiritually tainted, because it thrives on deceit. And we know where deceit comes from.

The power of the cross, by contrast, never deceives, is always true. The power of the cross pierces the darkness of this world with Light.

Jesus kept his distance from the powers of this world, as he spread the gospel of the Kingdom. Again and again Jesus ignored this world's movers and shakers. When they tried to get Jesus to flee from Herod's sword, he defied the threat and called Herod a fox. When they sought to trap Jesus into a conflict with Caesar, he replied, "Give Caesar what is Caesar's and God what is God's."

Yet, wrapped in apparent weakness, Jesus exercised unspeakable power. The Spirit of God moved through his hands to heal the sick, open blind eyes, set captive minds free from demonic oppression. By this power Jesus forgave sinners and raised the dead. And this power, the power of the cross, flowing through the Holy Spirit, was the only gift Jesus passed on to his followers, as he returned to the Father.

But here's a truth that professing Christians have overlooked down through the centuries: the power of the cross never allies itself with the power of this world. The power of the cross spurns political influence, rejects those short-cuts to success which Satan relentlessly offers us. Jesus never turns to Caesar or Herod or Wall Street to help his cause. He solved that issue in his wilderness temptation once-and-for-all.

***You shall worship the Lord your God,
and him only shall you serve.***

Money

you cannot serve
both
GOD & MONEY

Can you picture Jesus standing before those multitudes appealing for funds? Do we ever hear him promising prosperity to those who give him their “seed money”? Did he ever send his disciple out to “raise support for the work”?

Jesus and the disciples had to buy food, pay for lodging, give financial help to the needy along the way. But we never hear him asking for money. Jesus practiced what he preached.

“Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be yours as well.”

Jesus did not ignore money. In fact, Jesus insists that we are to be faithful to God in the way we use money.

“If you have not been found faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true riches?”

Money was Jesus’ servant; never his master. Nor was money ever the source of a moment’s anxiety.

By comparison, the Christian Agenda is all too often advanced and sustained by money. Money becomes the Master, while we pay lip service to God.

“If we had more money, we could do more good.” Hence the constant fund-raising, making money the engine that keeps the work going. So how does all this square with the Master’s warning?

“You cannot serve God and Mammon.”

Celebrity Leadership

Does our Christian Agenda come from Jesus? Or has this agenda been created by the celebrity leadership of the Christian world in North America?

A handful of high-profile leaders in the Christian world wield overwhelming influence over the minds of millions of believers. We listen and conform because these leaders are, after all, highly respected. Why shouldn't we listen and conform?

But our Lord counsels us to beware--- and think! He holds us accountable when we allow our faith to be molded by Christian leaders with an agenda—an agenda which clearly deviates from our Lord's gospel of the Kingdom.

“You shall know them by their fruits.”

Hierarchy

The Lord Jesus commands us to avoid hierarchies and titles.

But you are not to be called rabbi, for you have one teacher, and you are all brethren.

And call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven.

Neither be called masters, for you have one master, the Christ.

He who is greatest among you shall be your servant;

whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted.

Never mind the fact that for centuries and centuries our churches have been controlled by hierarchies. Even churches which claim to be free of clergy have often slipped into some form of top-down control.

But the Kingdom of God can only function with power from heaven when the “ CEO and board of directors” mentality gives way to a lowly servant-leadership. Our Lord repeated this truth again and again, yet it has been largely ignored.

The Kingdom

“The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of God is at hand! Repent, and believe the good news!”

From the day Jesus stepped out of the wilderness and spoke those words, he never deviated from his one focus: The Kingdom of God. All his parables, all his teachings were one relentless call to leave this world and its ways behind, and enter God’s Kingdom.

God’s Kingdom, God’s World, where God’s will is done as it is done in heaven. Where Truth conquers lies, where Resurrection Life conquers death, where the Lamb’s blood conquers sin.

The Kingdom is not a set of doctrines we subscribe to. The Kingdom is not a tightly controlled organization with headquarters in Brooklyn, New York. The Kingdom is a life we live under the power of the cross. And this life is made clear, and made possible by only one person: our Lord Jesus. The Kingdom belongs to God alone.

The Kingdom which Jesus opens to us as we soak up the New Testament gospels, is far simpler and cleaner than our “Christian Values” and “Christian Agendas” and “Christian Programs.”

If we take the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5, 6, and 7) or the Kingdom Parables (Matthew 13) or Jesus’ Upper Room Discourse, (John 13-17), we cannot miss the difference in tone and spirit from the “Christian Agenda” presently advanced by today’s evangelical leadership.

Our Lord warns us: we’re not all going to make it into the Kingdom.

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he/she who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

So where is my heart? If my heart is in the Kingdom of God, I am an alien and an exile in this world. I am in this world, but no longer of this world. Just as surely as I cannot serve God and Mammon at the same time, I cannot belong to God’s Kingdom and this world at the same time.

We thank God for teachers and servant leaders who strive to help us walk the walk of discipleship. But our Lord Jesus makes clear that each of us is responsible to weigh what’s being taught against his simple call to follow him all the way.

All the way to a cross.

His cross, and ours. The Narrow Door, which leads to life in God’s Kingdom.