

THE KINGDOM OF GOD VS. THE KINGDOM OF SELF

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The Kingdom of God Vs. The Kingdom of Self

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Introduction

It is common knowledge that at the very moment light appears, darkness is overcome. A beam of light seems almost to chase the darkness until it vanishes. Conversely, in the midday sun we have the ability to close ourselves into a closet where darkness then prevails. In the Gospel of John 1:5, John declares; "The light (Jesus) shines in the darkness and the darkness did not comprehend it." This monumental truth serves to illustrate that the "Gospel of the Kingdom" that Jesus came preaching was so revolutionary and contrary to the "Kingdom of Self" that they just did not comprehend it. John 3:19 sheds further light on man's predicament by establishing "that the light is come into the world and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their deeds were evil." And how true these words prove to be as they come echoing down the corridors of time 2,000 years later bringing us to the world's present condition as typified by the rapid deterioration of morality, ethics, and compatibility. The intention of this paper is to by contrast and comparison convey the supremacy of the Kingdom of God vs. the Kingdom of Self.

Introduction

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The Kingdom of Self-Definition

The Kingdom of self is the realm of dominion that we sovereignly deligate to ourselves, overruling the authority of our Creator, God Almighty. Websters Dictionary defines ego-centric as "viewing everything in relation to oneself." Ecclesiastes 12:8 says, "vanity of vanities...all is vanity." and rightly so, for as long as we claim authority and rulership over our life it is all in vain. These declarations by the egotist are almost always unspoken and usually under our level of awareness. It is at this level of subconsciousness that Satan manipulates people. Unfortunately the limited power we can generate within ourselves cannot overcome Satan's power to decieve the person (henceforth "King Self") into believing himself free without the help or "crutch" of anyone, including God.

Kingship Nurtured from Birth

The foundation for the Kingdom of Self is laid from our first day of existence as we cry for service and mother rushes to "His Majesty, The Baby¹." This self-centeredness of the child is within the natural plan of God, however the mother of John Weslyn declaired; "The will of a child should be conquered by the age of four²." Few parents consider that their most important contribution is to bring their children up in the "discipline and instruction of the Lord." (Eph. 6:2)

In periodic rebellions with the authority of his parents the child either establishes patterns of submission or patterns of supremacy, as his parent s submit to his wild shrieking or unruly behavior.

Submission vs. Rebellion

At this point loving discipline is the mark of real love. If patterns of submission to his parents develop early, submission to other authorities such as teachers, police, and ultimately God will follow naturally. If; however, this loving discipline is lacking or overridden by the determination of an unyielded child, patterns of rebellion and reliance on self for ultimate judgment are nurtured and begin to take root.

As conflicts arise with teachers and often police and the child entering adolescence again has his authority as "King" challenged, these patterns are either reinforced or broken down. "As the young person stands on the threshold of physical maturity and independence from parental authority, he senses that it may at last be possible for him to be number one, it is an intoxicating prospect³". The rebellious adolescent is so intoxicated on his delusions that the suffering he is inflicting does not even register with him. "King Self" is sensitive only to himself. He is obedient only to himself. Only my parents and God know how perfectly this portrays my adolescence. I ran away from home three or four times as a violent means of establishing my independence of everyone. There I went "King David" off into the sunset in the name of freedom, totally indifferent and insensitive to the love and concern of my parents. In retrospect I see how the crushing effect of these escapades on my mother failed to bring me to my senses. I was so caught up in myself, pride had such an unconscious grip on me that I rationalized and deceived myself into believing

that I was justified. I claimed to possess total freedom, while in reality, by attempting to play the part of God, I was in bondage to my search for freedom. In other words I was a slave to "King Self" and his desires. My story has a happy ending because it was down that very road of rebellion and egotism that I met Jesus, and His light began (and is continually) dispelling my darkness. (II Cor. 4:6)

Freedom vs. Bondage

In John 8:33-36, we see Jesus addressing the Jewish believers on freedom. The Jews thought that because of their heredity and never being in physical bondage that they were free, but Jesus responded, "Truely, truely, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a servant of sin." Until we realize that we were created to serve our Creator and not ourselves we remain in bondage to ourself. An example of this would be such complaints often heard as "I'm my own worst enemy", or "I don't feel free to do what I should do." The Apostle Paul said the very same thing; "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." (Rom. 7:18-19)

This bondage of self to self is characterized by the inability to start or stop when desired. A few examples will serve to clarify that we all are in bondage to something, whether it be King Self or King Jesus is our choice.

Lets take for example bondage of chemicals; like alcohol, tobacco, heroin, LSD, etc. or bondage to things; overindulgence in food, money-madness, gambling, stealing, persistent greed, unending lists of gadgets for our comfort and ease, chronic discontent, compulsive purchasing, etc.

Then there is bondage of time: Habitual tardiness, always talking about the good old days, fear of growing old, impatience...the lists could go on and on. It is easy to look around and begin to assign these to others, but to stop and contemplate which of these effectively describes ourselves is ego-slaying. Diagnosis of those around us is useless without first admitting and accepting our own bondage. There is a degree of power which we can exercise over bondage by confessing our faults to one another (James 5:16), but without coming under the rule of the Kingdom of God the results are usually only temporary.

Kingdom of God-Definition

The "Gospel of the Kingdom" that Jesus preached (Mk.1:15; Mt.4:23-25; Lk. 4:14-21) is without doubt the very foundation of His teachings. Dr. Frost asserts that "everybody is a believer, our faith is no more real or durable than the object in which that faith is placed." Jesus Himself expressed how essential it is to build our life on something as solid as rock and eternal in the midst of the storms and winds of life. He of course was referring to Himself as the chief cornerstone (Mt. 21:42).

"The Kingdom of God is the sovereign rule of God manifested in Christ to defeat His enemies, creating a people over whom He reigns and issuing in a realm in which the power of His reign is experienced."⁴

Time

The Kingdom of God is here and now. It is only those

who receive the King and His rule here and now that will enter the realm of its blessings in the future. (2 Cor.6:2)-
 "Now is the acceptable time."

Jesus made it emphatically clear that the Kingdom "is at hand (Mt.4:17). He replied to the Pharisees that His ability and authority to cast out demons was sufficient evidence that another rulership was moving in and taking over. He then affirms that "He first binds the strong man." (Mt. 12:28-29). Therefore the Kingdom of God that Jesus is preaching has taken supremacy over the former ruler, Satan. So, because of this present victory of King Jesus we as sons and daughters of God the King may move with the power and authority delegated to us (Mt.21:31; Col.1:3; Heb.2:10).

In Jesus' first sermon in His hometown Nazareth, He outlined from Scripture (Is.61:1) what the purpose of His mission to Earth was: (1) To preach the good news to the poor. What was the good news? (2) His Father in heaven sent Him to proclaim release to the captives, (all who were in bondage to their sin would be released-wow, that's something to shout about!) (3)The recovery of the sight to the blind,(all these years you've spent blinded by "King Self", Jesus is asking "wilt thou be made whole" both physically and spiritually?) (4)To set free the down trodden(before we are set free by Jesus, we are all downtrodden by sin, in varying degrees.) (5) To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. The Hebrew mind would immediately think of the celebrated Year of Jubilee (Lev.25:10).

Every fiftieth year in Israeli history three major events took place (1) Liberty to all Israelites in slavery or bondage. (2) All the ancestral possessions were returned to those who had to sell them because of poverty. Jesus is implying that the rulership we were created to enjoy (Gen.1:28) over creation is now restored if we submit to His Kingship. (3) There would be a year of rest and the land would not be worked. Hebrews 4:11 declares that "We which have believed do enter into rest." Yes, Kingdom members need not bear the often crushing burden of a life totally on their own shoulders as does the egotist. God is ready and infinitely able to help us.

Place

Jesus clearly taught that the Kingdom of God is within or among us. (Mt.6:10, Lk.17:21). Within each person's heart is where God wants to be King and establish His present reign while in the future, after His second coming, He will establish geographical boundaries.

It is important to note that if the Kingdom of God becomes established in a human heart, it is hardly noticed at first; because we allow God only the smallest control over our wills. God does not violate our will, He will; however, convict us of the sin that is hindering Kingdom freedom. Christians must realize that "King Self" surrenders by degrees. To establish new patterns of confession that Jesus is Lord, is to break old habits of living as though "I am Lord."

Power

Upon moving from the Kingdom of Self to the Kingdom of God we are transferred from a life of limited self

generated power to a living option of drawing upon the very source of life. "We are people of the Kingdom not only because we are ruled by God, but also because we share His reign"⁵ Jesus wants every believer to move with the same power and authority as He exhibited so that the Kingdom will be constantly growing. (Mt.9:8, Mk. 16:17; I Jo. 4:17). It is the King's desire that all of His subjects became participating ambassadors and carry the Good News in to foreign (or as yet unbelieving) territory. The power to overcome is Gods.(Acts 1:8; Mt. 6:13)

Threefold Foundation

"Repent"

The requirement for Kingdom entry as outline by Jesus, (Mk.1:15; Lk.13:3,5) is repentance. Jesus is not asking for a superficial repentance. "I'm sorry", He is explaining the need for the total reshaping and renewing of mind that is available by God through the Holy Spirit. Pastor Jack Hayford's definition of repentance comes to mind "a constant and progressive reordering of the mind." Indeed if we constantly with progressive eagerness surrender our self to God, He will step by step reorder our life and pattern them after His Son. This involves aligning our wills up with God's which takes time, but at the moment an individual wills to allow Christ to begin to change their life the Holy Spirit baptizes us into the living Body of Christ. The Word of God makes clear that this new-born life enables us to see the Kingdom of God(Jn.3:3), but total entry and possession requires a personal reception of the Holy Spirit.

Baptism

Jesus commands every believer be baptized in water (Mt. 28:19) as a symbol of the death and resurrection of Himself. The Apostle Paul said that if indeed we have died to ourself and are alive in Jesus then we should seek the things above (Col.3:1,2). Baptism is the act of confirming not only repentance but penance, not only turning to God with a new mind but, also turning to man and making restitution when possible. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things pass away; behold all things are new." (2 Cor. 5:17). Notice it says "old things pass away," they have not passed away in a flash of time but rather as we yield to the King patterns of anger, fear, guilt, etc. begin to disappear and be replaced by love, joy, peace.

"Recieve"

"You have not because you ask not," is an old cliché which may have originated in Jesus words to the disciples concerning prayer and available power in the Holy Spirit (Lk. 11:9-13). In the same way that a soldier wouldn't go to battle with a cork-gun, God does not want His children to battle the power of the natural man. God has poured out the Holy Spirit upon man to empower us to know, to speak, and to live like Jesus. God knows our inadequacy to be like Jesus so if we by faith invite Jesus to empower our life with the Holy Spirit, He has promised to do so (Ps.103:7).

As the inner man is immersed in God's Spirit, many things begin happen: (1) There is a "washing, cleansing and purification". (2) A "Healing, renewal, and restoration,

both physical and spiritual, which is permanent, total, lasting, ongoing, and enduring."⁶

In the book of Acts we see this three-fold foundation for life and power outlined by Peter (Acts 2:39); John (Acts 8:15-17); and Paul (Acts 9:17). To deny the reality of the present issuance of the gifts of the Spirit is to limit God and also our own ministry. God will lay this foundation upon the Rock (Jesus) in the life of everyone, but the ultimate choice is ours; bondage to Self or Freedom in Jesus.

Establishing before Possession

On the premise that the Lord is establishing His Kingdom now within the individual believer, Jesus points out that the believer that is faithful now to the King, will receive additional authority upon His return. The Lord is establishing His government in every village and city, the Church, or living Body of Christ is sort of a state within a state. Upon the second coming of Jesus and the soon following total overthrow of Satan, (Rev. 19:10-21), Jesus will delegate rulers and authorities. To which individuals will this supreme honor be bestowed? Rev 2:26 tells us that the overcomers will receive "authorities over the Nations".

If the vast majority of Christians would begin to grasp this vital truth that moving in and possessing the Kingdom is not a passive submission to the powers of darkness that have manipulated the majority of believers, but rather, a very real battle for the souls of humanity.

The best example of this establishing before possession principal that comes to mind is God's dealings with the Israelites and how these patterns so typify the New Testament believer.

When Isreal, lead by Moses, first moved out of Egyptian bondage into the wilderness, they were very immature in receptivity to God. God needed time to deal with them and bring them to a place of faith and obedience. The former state of slavery had dulled thier minds and the capacity to think for themselves. In our lives we too are moving from the slavery of Self to the freedom of Jesus. As in the natural, so in the spiritual "You cannot be free unless you know your in bondage⁷." This often unconscious bondage to habits, people, material things ect., God wants to reveal to each of us. How? By His Word, both the living Word(Rhema) being Jesus, and the written Word (Logos). God wants the minute mustard seed of a new-born believer to be nurtured by His Word, infiltrated by the rays of His Son Jesus, and activated for growth the His Holy Spirit.

Unity of Purpose

"It is one thing to be united by problems from whence we came, quite another to be united in the purpose to which we are committed⁸." In John, Chapter seventeen, Jesus is praying for all believers that it is primarily the unity and love among the brethern that will illustrate to the unbelieving world the reality of Kingdom life. How does this unity of purpose develop and mature? As we individually and corporatly study the Word of our God His purpose will become emmanently visible as a family of children modeled after Jesus, not only in word but also in deed. (James 1:22) When believers realize that the individual doctrine is not as important as on whom the doctrine is based, that is the Lord Jesus Christ and the common vision of His Kingdom being presently established, then unity can begin to flow.

Realization

God wants a love commitment from all of His children in which they realize their responsibility for stewardship over the Gospel. As we begin to realize who we are in Jesus we can evaluate and appropriate our inheritance as the sons and daughters of the living God. The available power we believers have "In Jesus Name" is again being focused upon as if was in the New Testament Church. In the finished work at Calvary Jesus not only effected reconciliation of the fallen state of man but also restored our rightful place of rulership over Creation. We as members of the Kingdom have the God ordained authority to; cast out demons, speak with new tongues, ask according to God's will in prayer and Expect an answer, in short we have the ability to live at peace with our Creator bringing about an inner peace that is not merely a victim of circumstance. All this is at our disposal with major prerequisite, that we abide in Christ (Jn. 15:5).

Conveying this "living option to existing on this planet as a victim of circumstance, habit, personal weakness, unfortunate heredity, frustrating environment, selfishness and pride, sickness and disease..."⁹ should be the essence of the believers outreach to the world.

Rearranging Priorities

The Lord first, others second, and I'm third. This would be the simplest and most direct expression I can think of to nutshell Kingdom stewardship. The Kingdom of Self implies that I am first, my friends and family are second, and others and God when I have time. As already stated yielding the Self to God is a progressive surrender, therefore a firm grasp of proper Biblical priorities is fundamental to a growing Christian.

Spiritual Worship

"Let everything that has breath Praise the Lord" (Ps.150:6)
 First and foremost God wants us to learn to overcome our circumstances by learning the pray and praise His mighty name. Jesus said that if we would ask in His name, believing, we would recieve.(Matt 21:22) This faith to believe with seeing will be manifested by praising. Believing that as we ask he is presently answering will cause the unceasing spirit of praise within each believer to swell and a natural outflow of praise is natural. Sometimes in a joyful outburst, sometimes in a gentle spirit of adoration of God's grace and love and kindness. If we have a vital made-alive-by-the-Holy Spirit vertical relationship to God through Jesus, then the next priority will come very naturally.

Spiritual Fellowship

I once heard fellowship defined as "two fellows in the same ship." The importance of interaction between saints could not have been emphasized any clearer by Jesus (Jn. 13:34,35) or by Paul (Galation 6:2). We cannot isolate ourselves and disregard the other members of Christ's body. We are all interdependent and as we minister to one another the truth and love of Jesus, God is all the while maturing as for the next priority.

Spiritual Stewardship

Our ministry to the world is to be characterized by the words of Jesus, "Freely you have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:8). Jesus is saying that indeed you have received the gift

of total freedom, and it is so dynamic that it will blow this kingdom of self to pieces. You share it in a way that will demonstrate the validity of these kingdom principles and leave the rest to the Holy Spirit. It is God's utmost desire that all come to repentance and live life the way we were created to live it, in subjection to our Creator.

Jesus has given every believer the power and authority to function as representatives of the Living God. We are the only physical manifestations of the Gospel of Jesus Christ available for God to accomplish His will and purpose in our rapidly decaying and demoralized world. Albert Schweitzer said, that "the miracle must occur in us before it occurs in the world; the beginning of the Kingdom is to be found in our determination to bring every thought and deed under the dominion of the Kingdom."¹⁰ (2 Cor. 10:5) "Man must endeavor to make God's Kingdom a reality in this world by works of love."¹¹

Conclusion

In conclusion, I'd like to convey that Jesus is presently calling a people, a royal priesthood of saints who should go and bring forth fruit and their fruit should remain (Jn. 15: 16). We who profess to be under this Kingship have a responsibility to be as trees deeply rooted in Jesus and His Word, laden with fruit and like deep wells full of water to refresh the weary and needy. We must check the roots of our life for it is the fruit that distinguishes whether or not the foundation of our life is rooted and built upon the sand of King self or the Rock of King Jesus.

FOOTNOTES

- 1 Earl Jabay, The Kingdom of Self (Plainville, N.J.: Logos International, 1974), p. 7.
- 2 Ibid., p. 12.
- 3 Ibid., p. 19.
- 4 Merrill C. Tenney, Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan House, 1962), p. 466.
- 5 Ibid., p. 466.
- 6 Robert Frost, Spiritual Foundations Lecture 8, "Holy Spirit Baptism," Fall, 1974; p. 3.
- 7 Bob Mumford, The King and You (Old Tappen, N.J.: Flem-H. Revell Co., 1974), p. 26.
- 8 Charles Simpson, "Learning A New Way To Live," New Wine, (Ft. Lauderdale, Florida: New Wine Publications, Sept. 1974), p. 26.
- 9 Jack Hayford, "Living In The Kingdom," Sermon delivered at Church On The Way, August 1974.
- 10 Albert Schweitzer, Reverence For Life (Kansas City, Missouri: Hallmark Cards, Inc., 1971), p. 38.
- 11 Ibid., p. 39.

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