

Furthering the Kingdom

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When we look at the fractured landscape of people trying to follow Christ, we find, in general terms and broad strokes, what some are calling “post-denominational Christianity” (a curious mixture of deceptive churchianity and religious spirituality) and the “out of church” refugees who have fled from all institutional hierarchies. Within both groups, however, there is little focus on personally (individually or corporately) following the King as the only means to truly further the kingdom of God. This only means that various sects and divisions will continue (especially in those groups that have completely departed from the literal and interactive Lordship of Christ over the group – sadly the vast majority of groups that claim to be “Christian”) to proliferate, further devastating the spiritual landscape, preparing many for succumbing to the coming and even present Satanic deceptions of the last days.

What is a genuine seeker of Christ, who desires Him and Him alone to be his King, to do? Or, as others have asked at various times of impending hardship and darkness, “How shall we then live?” The first (and truly only) answer to this question is, “Follow the Lamb wherever He leads. Period.” (see Rev. 14:4, Jn. 10:27, etc.) But the danger in this is that we become isolated individuals who, even if we have only truth in our possession (which may or may not be true), we have not the strength of the body of Christ to draw upon. What practical guidelines might we use to build or gather (even if only in a “loose network” – see Mt. 13:47 for the appropriateness of this figure) a group that truly furthers the interests of God’s kingdom? And again, we cannot over-emphasize the need to be led into all truth by the Spirit of truth (Jn. 16:13) so that we may truly co-labor (1 Cor. 3:9) with Him who alone builds His ekklesia. (Mt. 16:18)

Perhaps the first issue we need to resolve (or at least contemplate) is,

“What does it mean to have Christ as King?”

Those who have learned to be lawlessly (doing what is right in one’s own eyes because there has been no king to follow and obey – Jdgs. 21:25) independent may require years to become a “King’s man,” one willing to obey the King (of life, truth, love, etc. – Acts 3:15, Jn. 18:37, 1 Jn. 4:8-9, etc.) even at the cost of one’s own life if necessary. (Mt. 10:39, etc.) Many will have trouble even recognizing that the gospel of the kingdom – that there is a King who is to be followed and obeyed and that one can only remain in the kingdom of God by doing the will of God (Mt. 7:21, etc.) - *is* the original gospel preached by the original apostles. Much work with much patience is required to restore sheep who have been deceived, neglected, malnourished and even abused in modern churchianity.

The second issue, closely related to the first, is,

“How do we help one another submit to the Lordship (King-ness) of Christ?”

This is simply another way of saying, How do we “Consider one another in order to stir up love and good works”? (Heb. 10:24) The answers the “church” might give are not adequate. Our “marching orders” must come from the Head Christ Jesus and not from any man, certainly not from some “pastoral” Diotrephes (3 Jn. 9) who uses the people for his own purposes and

advantage. We must know one another first and to do this we must overcome the isolations our culture, economy and technology have placed upon us.

Perhaps the first efforts to gather any group should be based on the pattern of the apostles and the first believers who were filled with the Holy Spirit.

“They continued steadfastly in the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” (Acts 2:42)

And yet again, this is not a pattern to be fixed on our calendars as we begin to mail out invitations. First and foremost, we need to seek the King as to whom we should even begin to try to be *ekklesia* with. “The Lord knows those who are His” (2 Tim. 2:19) and He alone can direct us to those whom He has trained (or is training or will be training) to be His loyal subjects and servants. The pattern is given as the most likely way in which He will bring us together. We may need to share some kingdom truths with a friend, a neighbor, an acquaintance or even a total stranger. This is preaching “the apostles’ teachings” – the truth of the kingdom of God that transcends all of men’s efforts and teachings which have produced only fractured churchianity and demonically-driven apostasy. Invitations to share a meal may be a way to simultaneously delve further into one another’s lives and into kingdom truths. And surely, as soon as any kind of similar focus is found, common prayer should be a regular (as “regular” as our getting together may be) occurrence. While the “church” is content to have only a few “prayer warriors” who meet to pray, the *ekklesia* needs *all* of its members able to effectively wrestle against our spiritual enemies. (Eph. 6:18, etc.) And yet again, each of these activities must be led by the Spirit, especially prayer, because the enemy will surely oppose these efforts to follow only the one true King. *Only* in this way of complete submission to the Holy Spirit will be able to maintain a pattern of assembly consistent with that of the New Testament.

Because so many who seek to follow Christ have been tainted by their time in “church,” the biggest hurdle to overcome will be knowledge learned at “church.” Doctrines that derive from men (Mt. 15:3) or even demons (1 Tim. 4:1) but are held to be sacred, beloved and cherished truths from God (and there are several of these doctrinal deceptions that are aimed precisely at disrupting a group’s unity in the Spirit) will quickly rise to the forefront of discussion and we must be prepared to stand against any deceptions. Reverting to the first two issues – having Christ as our true King and seeking to aid one another in submitting to His Lordship – is likely to always be a good first step in any discussion of controversial doctrines or teachings. And in this age of dissension and deception, *every* truth of God has at least one, perhaps many, counterfeits and distortions designed to derail any individual or group away from the King and His kingdom.

Following are several Scriptural standards by which we can peaceably and corporately seek to glean from the mind of Christ. (1 Cor. 2:16)

- Paul said to the Ephesian elders, “I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God.” (Acts 20:27) It is not impossible for even one man to know the whole counsel of God on a matter.

- Paul wrote to his fellow worker Timothy, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim. 2:15) Diligent workers who reverently and

carefully seek the mind of Christ will be able to rightly divide and apply the word of truth (in accordance with the whole counsel of God) to the situation at hand. (see also 1 Ths. 2:3-6)

- Paul wrote to the carnal (fleshly) and divided Corinthians, “We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. ...the natural man [who is manipulated or controlled by the god of this world – Eph. 2:2] does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.” (1 Cor. 2:12, 14) Anyone who remains obstinately unable to receive the things of God which the rest of the group is able to receive is to be restored to spirituality as gently as possible (Gal. 6:1) or, in due course and time, rejected by the *entire* group. (Mt. 18:17)

- Paul also wrote to the Corinthians, “We speak wisdom among those who are mature...” (1 Cor. 2:6) In some rare instances, the situation may truly be beyond the scope of the written words of the New Testament. But more likely this wisdom will be needed in matters that require spiritual discernment so as to rightly divide an issue and appropriately nest it within the whole counsel of God. In the discussion that attends such matters (which may become quite heated), the standard of what godly wisdom is like should be held to in order to keep the discussions from being harmful to the hearers. (see 2 Tim. 2:14) James wrote, “Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking [for things like preeminence or significance] in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking exist [are allowed to remain], confusion and every evil thing will be there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.” (Jas. 3:13-18) Anyone who insists on forcing his or her own “private interpretations” (things gleaned apart from the work of the Spirit of truth – see 2 Pet. 1:20-21) upon the group – especially if his views are expressed with acerbic or acidic sarcasm and rudeness – is to be pressed toward repentance or rejected by the *unanimous* consent and confirmation of the entire group. Rejection by the one who has the most Bible knowledge (possibly the most dangerous person in the assembly) only produces yet another Nicolaitan Diotrophes (see Rev. 2:6, 15) and a “majority vote” only brings the minority under the tyranny of the majority – all in contradiction to Jesus’ command that “It shall not be so among you.” (see Mk. 10:42-43, etc.)

- Paul wrote, “I beseech you to have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness [humility] and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unanimity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” (Eph. 4:1-3) The Greek word rendered “unity” in many translations is *henotes* [1775] and is more accurately

rendered *unanimity* - unanimous agreement, one accord. (see also Acts 15:22, 1 Cor. 1:10, etc.) Paul wrote, “By one Spirit we were all baptized into one body...and have *all* been made to drink one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13) and he later wrote to the same people, “I fear...[that] if [someone] who comes preaches [to you] another Jesus whom we [Paul and Timothy] have not preached, or if you receive *a different spirit* which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you may well put up with it.” (2 Cor. 11:3-4) Only one Spirit, that of Christ and God, is to be received if we are to be true *ekklesia* that furthers the kingdom of God. Any group that fails to practice this unanimity of the Spirit is operating outside of God’s purpose that we all be one, as Christ and God are one, so that the world around us might see that Jesus is the Messiah whom God sent to be the Lamb who would take away the sins of the world. (see Jn. 17:21-23, 1:29)

We must take special care to hear what Christ said about our being one. We are to be one so that the world will believe and know that the Father sent Jesus and that the Father loves us too. The purpose of any group then is to corporately reproduce Christ – most often on the scale of two or three. (Mt. 18:20) The purpose of any group is to build up *His* body – in spiritual strength and not just in numbers. Any true leader (those who go before, not those who stand over!) must have as their “prime directive” the words of John the Baptist: “He must increase, but I must decrease.” (Jn. 3:30) Any leader who takes the preeminence to himself and away from Christ is simply another Diotrephes. Every older leader who is a true elder (Greek *presbuteros* [4245] or *episkopos* [1985], in accordance with Paul’s list of characteristics to Timothy and Titus) must look for the servants (Greek, *diakonos* [1249], those who raise a cloud of dust in performing the needed work) who can go and physically attend to the needs brought to the group’s attention. These servants, if they prove steadfast and reliable, are the leaders of the next group or next generation. When a group is too large to gather in one home, we are to simply gather in two or three homes. A group that is too large produces spectators and not participants. Being *ekklesia* is definitely *not* a “spectator sport”!

This *is* the high and upward calling of God in Christ Jesus for any group who names the name of Christ. This *is* the standard by which we should evaluate whether we are being genuine *ekklesia* or we have settled for being merely some man’s “church.” If we are content to be carnal, divided or apostate, it matters not what label we take upon ourselves – our judgment is not sleeping. But if we are going to take His name as our Husband and King, let us always remember that His is a name above every other name and the one to which every knee will someday bow, and that every tongue will someday agree that Jesus Christ is King and thus glorify God. (Phlp. 2:9-11) The key responsibility upon mankind now is to individually and willingly choose to receive Christ as King and thus glorify God with their lives here and now and for the remainder of their days – or else they can wait until their death punctuates their earthly existence and they will then unwillingly acknowledge Christ as King and be consigned to the eternal lake of fire reserved for the devil and his angels (Mt. 25:41) and whoever has so served these masters of darkness (evil, oppression, deceit and rebellion against God) that their name is removed from or never entered into God’s Book of Life. (see Rev. 20:15, 3:5) God’s judgments upon every individual and work of men will be “true and righteous” (Rev. 16:7, 19:2) and many will be eternally dismissed who believe they have a right to remain in His kingdom. (Mt. 7:22-23) The task before us now is to purify ourselves as He is pure (1 Jn. 3:2-3) and to cleanse

ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting [completing] holiness in the fear of God. (2 Cor. 7:1) Anything less is mere “church.”

Let he who has ears hear.

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