

The Kingdom of God Is Within You Luke 17:20-21

The primary purpose of the Old Covenant ("the Law") is stated rather succinctly in Galatians 3:19. It was "added because of transgressions... UNTIL THE SEED would come...". The law covenant of the Old Testament was to be an interim covenant given to the Jewish people UNTIL the Messiah was delivered through them. The government of God on earth would then "rest upon His shoulders" (Is 9:6), i.e., He would be its King!

That is why Mark opens his gospel with Jesus' first message being, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand - it has drawn near!" (Mk 4:15) And then He proceeded to speak of the kingdom, teach about the kingdom, invite others into the kingdom - even calling it His Father's and His Kingdom. Toward the end of His life on earth (as Jesus of Nazareth) an "inquisition" occurs (Lk 17:20) The tone was something like this, "OK, Mr. King wanna be, when is all this kingdom stuff going to kick in? You're an illegitimately born carpenter's son from Nazareth of all places, and we've never seen anything good (i.e., "godly") come from there. You have a twelve man, uneducated, untrained army (one of whom is working for us!), a few peasant female groupies... where are the signs? the excitement? the power? Where is this kingdom of yours?"

Jesus' answer is interesting (as always). "The kingdom of God is unlike anything you are looking for, anything you are familiar with. It is like nothing on earth - it doesn't come from below. You're looking for it in all the wrong places, for all the wrong reasons, in all the wrong signs. Its not over 'here' in your precise definitions and rigid behavioral boundaries. Its not over 'there' in political power or military might. Its not over 'here' or over 'there'... it is right in your midst! But you are so far off from its reality you can't identify it when it's right in front of you! (see Jo 5:37) I DIDN'T COME TO CHANGE 'OVER HERE' OR 'OVER THERE' - I CAME TO CHANGE YOU!"

Luke 17:21 is one of the Bible's more contested verses. Some translations say it is "in your midst" while others say it is "within you." Which is it? I say it is both! To His audience, His critics, it is "in your midst" - they wanted no part of Him dwelling within or ruling over them. To believers, His promise is "My Father the King and I will come and abide within you." (Jo 14:20,23; Col 1:27) The kingdom of God is WHEREVER THE KING IS. Kingdom reality is experienced and expressed WHEREVER THE KING RULES. The kingdom of God is the dynamic personal presence of the King AND the functional reality of His reign, His rule in and through us... wherever we are (see Ro 5:17). Kingdom life is God-indwelt, God-governed life. It doesn't always change "over here" or "over there" - its not meant to. But it always changes us.

Christ the King lived His life on earth as though no other True King than His Father ever existed (see Is 44:6-8; 45:3-7; 46:30). He is inviting and empowering us to do the same.

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Greetings

There may not be anything that both frustrates and saddens me any quicker than the absence of spiritual maturity in our churches. The divisiveness, the contentiousness, the inability to resolve things Christianly - ala Christ - really has no origins in pandemic, political, or socio-economic angst. It has everything to do with the paucity of Christian thinkers and choosers.

I will not try to define "7 Maturity Markers" or even describe "3 Steps to Christian Decision Making". I'd just like to know - for all of our busy, wordy, noisy "Christian" activity, where are the people who evidence their union with Christ with the mind of Christ? Who exercise an intelligence fueled by the love of Christ? Who by the Spirit's direction can translate "not I, but Christ" into "not I, but you?" Who accept and employ their function as God's stewards of His kingdom supply on earth for the gain of others and not just themselves? Who, rather than seeking to defeat the foe seek to win the foe to Christ and His life? Who will dare to embrace that the deepest reality of union life is dying (daily) to our own privileges, preferences, and pursuits of happiness... even for the sake of those who couldn't care less about our privileges, preferences, and pursuits of happiness? Where are those people? Why aren't there more of those people among us?



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