

Wednesday, August 9, 2017

SIGNS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus' priority, above all else in his 3 year ministry, was preaching and teaching about the Kingdom of God and demonstrating it. The Kingdom is God's activity, His dominion over everything He has created. It is primarily a dynamic concept- God's sovereign reign or rule. The eventual outcome of His work (not ours) shall be a world-wide, universal Realm on earth. [A major resource for me about the Gospel of the Kingdom is the writing of George Ladd] It is popular to believe God's Kingdom is strictly spiritual, equating the Kingdom with Salvation and Heaven or simply with the Church itself. Others equate the Kingdom with Social Activism and, specifically, human efforts to transform Society/Culture worldwide according to current cultural (American) values. My understanding of the Kingdom and, therefore, of the Signs of the Kingdom is derived primarily from the entire Bible, including Genesis, the Mosaic Law, the Prophets, as well as the four Gospels and the rest of the NT.

God has been sovereign, ruling over His creation and Humankind, since the beginning of time and Human History! The Kingdom was kicked into high gear with the incarnation of God the Son and particularly with his ascension to the Throne in Heaven from which He now rules. It is executed world-wide by the work of God the Spirit. Understanding this reality challenges and changes our view about many common Christian doctrines and practices. It greatly enlarges our (my) perspective of God, His work and ours in today's world.

The Triune God's work in the world is accomplished directly or indirectly through many instruments and agencies. The Kingdom breaks through and progresses here and there, throughout the centuries and around the globe. Providential History is the attempt to find and record what God has been doing. Many Evangelicals believe such History simply cannot be done. Others, who would like to do it, are very cautious about doing it because it is prone to much speculation and very subjective conclusions. I am convinced however, while caution and humility is required, the six following developments in History or in Current Events are trustworthy Signs of the Kingdom of God at work. They also provide signs of strong Satanic obstruction to that Kingdom.

Care of the Environment (the Creation) as defined in Scripture

Neglect, waste, destruction and exploitation of natural resources are wrong

Preservation and fulfillment of all people(s) as rational, relational, creative, moral and spiritual human beings

Policies or programs that exploit, oppress, dehumanize or destroy persons are evil

Spread of the Gospel of Grace and Conversions of People to Christ and growth of the Church.

At a minimum, I believe we must define The Church as all people who believe in and worship the Triune God and who personally confess faith in Jesus as the Christ, their Lord and Savior

Restrictions, persecutions and attempts to destroy the Church are evil

Strengthening of Marriage and Family as defined in Scripture, ie- heterosexual, complementarian and extended (multi-generational).

Laws, policies and practices that undermine or destroy such Marriages or Families and their functions are wrong

Economics as defined in Scripture, ie- stewardship of private property for the common good and compassionate free-market capitalism

Laws and policies that undermine or destroy such Stewardship and Capitalism are wrong

Government as defined in Scripture, ie- a democratic but limited, constitutional republic under God and His Law, whose primary purpose is to preserve and protect the well-being of its citizens [Justice]

Laws, policies and practices that undermine or destroy such Government are wrong

Ideally, Believers should actively align themselves with the work God is doing in any or all of these six theaters of spiritual warfare. We do not build the Kingdom! God does! But we can be, the Church can be, His instrument(s) as we obey Him, individually and corporately, submitting to His authority and power in our lives, in the myriad places in the world to which He calls us. It is also important to recognize that God uses unbelievers and "secular" institutions to advance His Kingdom in the world. We must not discount Common Grace, even as we promote Special Grace. Our sovereign God rules as He shall, where He shall.

All of the above, very simply stated, requires much unpacking and real world application. My current personal study is to discover any or all of these signs of God at work (or the opposition to God at work) in the 50 year period of US History in the United States between the end of the Civil War and the beginning of the First World War.

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 16:23