

The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms

Lesson 4-The Two Kingdoms in the NT

In the New Testament we also see the saints living in the reality of two kingdoms. Like the saints in the Old Testament (before Moses and during the exile), Christians are called to live as sojourners and _____ on this earth. However, since Christ has come, and the New Covenant has been inaugurated there are also key differences.

“The church exists as a community of sojourners and exiles precisely because the common kingdom, founded in the Noahic covenant, continues to exist.”¹

The Redemptive Kingdom under the NT

Christ came to establish the _____ and it is in the church that we see the redemptive kingdom on the earth. Therefore, we should not seek to find (nor expect to find) the redemptive kingdom in other places (ex. the state, the family, etc). Christ loved the church and gave Himself for her. What God is doing of eternal significance is happening in the church!

“When Christ came, He did not establish the state, or the family, or a school or a business venture. These things already existed and were governed and preserved under the covenant with Noah. The Lord Jesus Christ established one thing: His church...Though the church today is clothed in weakness and humility it is far more glorious than anything the Old Testament saints ever experienced.”

To help ourselves understand the redemptive kingdom in the NT the gospel of Matthew gives much insight. In the gospel of Matthew Jesus commonly refers to the redemptive kingdom in the NT as the “kingdom of _____.” While there are similarities between the redemptive kingdom in the OT and NT, there are also key differences.

“Few things are more important for the two-kingdoms doctrine than a proper view of the kingdom of God that Jesus announced...It is significant that Jesus does not begin preaching about the kingdom of heaven until John the Baptist is arrested (4:12-17). John the Baptist was the last of the OT prophets...Now that John has finished his ministry, the old is over and the new has come.”

The teachings of Christ in the Sermon on the Mount show the _____ of living under the Redemptive Kingdom now that Christ has come. While there are different understandings for how to interpret the Sermon on the Mount, what VanDrunen offers is a thought-provoking alternative that helps to explain how life in the church is different now that Christ has come.

A few examples of differences between the way believers in the OT and in the NT were to act can be seen in the issues of _____ and _____. Under the OT divorce was more openly acceptable and common. However, in the NT the reasons for biblical divorce are made narrower. Under the OT the theme was “eye for an eye” under the NT we are told to “turn the other cheek.”

“Things are very different in the kingdom of heaven. In this kingdom marital tension should not lead to divorce...slaps on the cheek should not provoke a proportionate retaliation...The kingdom of heaven is a realm where the demands of justice seem strangely transcended...The Sermon on the Mount is not first and foremost about ethics, but about Jesus Himself...He has won the kingdom for them once and for all. He satisfied the claims of justice, and thus he attained the first Adam’s reward. Jesus’ disciples, therefore, have entered a kingdom that

¹ All quotes taken from David VanDrunen’s book “Living in God’s Two Kingdoms”

does not seek justice but basks in the reality of justice satisfied. How interesting that Jesus tells them not to walk away when someone slaps them, but to turn the other cheek for a second slap. This is precisely what God in Christ has done for us who are citizens of His kingdom! Instead of returning the evil we did to Him with a proportionate retaliation or simply walking away and ignoring us, God turned His other cheek, as it were, and endured a second evil from us by letting us crucify His Son.”

“They (the teachings contained in the Sermon on the Mount) are given only to those who are already citizens of the kingdom of heaven...In this kingdom Christians have nothing left to prove, no justice yet to achieve. Thus they pursue an ethic that exhibits the reconciliation and forgiveness that come in the gospel and forsake the claims of justice against those who wrong them.”

Now that Christ has come and we have more clearly “seen” God’s grace and mercy the saints (those who have experienced this gospel) are called to _____ it (especially to those in the church).

The Common Kingdom in the NT

Under the Noahic covenant there were two main points: to be fruitful and _____ and for society to uphold _____.

“It is no surprise that the family and the state are the two institutions of the common kingdom that receive special attention in the New Testament.”

Marriage, having and raising children, and the state are all elements of the Noahic covenant and are _____ to both believers and nonbelievers. Therefore heaven will have no marriage, children will not be born, and there will be a united world in full submission to Christ so there will be no need for earthly rulers.

However, the NT does help the Christian to know how to live in these areas in the common kingdom. Families should act in ways that are in accordance with God’s _____. Also, the saints should be model citizens in all areas (except those which are in clear violation of God’s _____).

“Like the family, the state and its civil magistrates are legitimate regardless of whether magistrates and citizens are Christians, since they exist under the Noahic covenant as part of the common kingdom. The civil magistrates recognized by the New Testament were, after all, officers of the Roman Empire. No one could have mistaken the Roman government and Roman magistrates as ‘Christians.’ Americans and other people living in Western democracies often like to complain about their governments, but we should keep in mind that we have it far better under our own governments-however badly they behave-than the early Christians had it under Rome. Furthermore, the New Testament never indicates that civil authorities have any responsibility to make the social or political order conform to the redemptive kingdom of heaven.”

“Thus Christians are to participate in the life of the family and the life of the state, though these institutions are not uniquely Christian...Living in families and living under the state are shared experiences among those who profess Christ and those who do not.”

As Christians live in the common kingdom, they must strive to model the spirit of Christ and be loving, gentle, and kind toward their neighbors. However, as Christians love their neighbor, they are at the same time to be on guard against being _____ to this world. Christians must remember that the world is always bent toward wickedness so we must constantly be on guard longing for that which is to come.